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GOD IN THE THOUGHT OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS AND ŚRI MADHVĀCĀRYA

IGNATIUS PUTHIADAM

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GOD IN THE THOUGHT OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS AND ŚRI MADHVĀCĀRYA

(Śri L. D. Swamikannu Pillai
Endowment Lectures 1978–79, University of Madras)

IGNATIUS PUTHIADAM

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God in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and Śri Madhvācārya

Ignatius Puthiadam

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Flame Chakra For Living Religions

At the centre is the Mystery of the Absolute which is inaccessible Light, but darkness to the human intellect and ineffable silence. The different Religions are represented by the appropriate symbols on the tongues of fire which remain separate on the surface, but have an essential underlying unity, being the expressions of the same Supreme Light. Dialogue between Religions is not to stop with the externals of rites, doctrines etc. but must proceed to the experience of the Central Mystery where we all meet.

Fourteen Religions and Ideologies are represented by the respective symbols in the chronological order of their origin.

1	Primeval Religions	—	Cosmic Tree
2	Animistic Religions	—	Nāga (Snake)
3	Chinese Religions	—	Yin/Yang
4	Zoroastrianism	—	Rising Sun
5	Hinduism	—	OM
6	Judasim	—	Star of David
7	Shintoism	—	Gate
8	Jainism	—	Swastika (sun)
9	Buddhism	—	Chakra
10	Christianity	—	Christ—Anagram
11	Islam	—	Crescent and Star
12	Sikhism	—	Book
13	Humanism	—	Clasped Hands
14	Marxism	—	Machine Chakra

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Sri L. D. Swamikannu Pillai Endowment Lectures, 1978-79 delivered on 18th to 20th March 1980

GOD IN THE THOUGHT OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS AND SRI MADHVACARYA

Ignatius Puthiadam S. J.

Introduction

In our times, the process of secularization is rapidly growing in the industrialised and the developing nations. Atheism has become a positive, organic and aggressively propagandist force in the world. In the calculations, plans and policies of many politicians, economists, scientists and futurologists, God is not a significant factor. Many philosophers today defend and teach atheistic systems of thought. Even some theologians speak of the death of God.

There was a time when people spoke of God and did believe that they had an adequate and clear conception of what they were meaning and talking. Certainly the idea of God formed part of their conceptual systems. They thought of the world and of themselves in relation to God. He explained many hidden secrets. But today those basic presuppositions and ideas, the sharing of which makes human discourse possible and intelligible have to a great extent disappeared. Analytic philosophy, basing itself on such positivistic criteria of truth as observation, experiment, measurement and verification, submits "God talk" to a logical analysis. The word God has no clearly defined and universally accepted meaning. It is not a word like 'cow' or 'cat'. In the primitive stage of men's history the word God had a mythological sense a being different from men, a God who was seen and heard by some and who walked with men. Later his presence was felt in miracles and signs. In the philosophical period of our history, God's transcendence and incomprehensibility were insisted upon. God was included in an all-embracing metaphysics. He was 'above' and 'beyond' all, the source and goal of

reality. But in the present scientific age, the functions ascribed to God are decreasing. The hidden mysteries of the world are being opened by inner worldly keys. Many are today questioning the need of God as an explanation of the world.

The present under and surface currents of thought openly or tacitly deny any significance to the religious past of mankind. Many consider religions as instruments of oppression, of unfreedom and legitimizing agencies of the 'status quo'. Traditional atheism facing so much in the world that is disharmonious, absurd and nightmarish found it impossible to reconcile these facts with the belief in a good God. World and history are expressions of senselessness and vanity. But today's atheism is fighting for the dignity, responsibility, freedom and centrality of man. It summons man to reject all that alienates him from himself and to destroy all the fetters that hinder him from fully becoming human.

Yet today's men and their thought are on the whole filled with deep concern for their fellow men. Today's men, including atheist humanists, are ready to involve themselves in the task of uplifting their fellow men. Many of our fellow men do pose radical questions, relentlessly search after truth, goodness and love. Psychiatrists like V. Frankl believe that the most representative characteristic of the human reality is the search for ultimate meaning. He defines religion as man's quest for ultimate meaning and purpose. Whatever be the pictures and images of God painted, fashioned and set up by religious men for our worship and so often rejected by us, still in our involvement with ultimate concerns and the quest for and the strivings after the absolute future, we can discover the presence of God in our midst.

In 10th century the great Udayana wrote: "Here in the consideration of the Supreme Soul (God), whom all worship under some name or other, no matter whichever of the four objects of life they strive after, the followers of the *Upaniṣads* as one having a nature as pure and conscious; the followers of Kapila as the primeval omniscient, perfect one; the followers of Patañjali as one who is untouched by afflictions, actions, fruition and impressions and who having assumed control over a body of manifestation reveals the sacred tradition and usages and favours the living beings to reach Mokṣa; the

Great Pāśupatas, as one who cannot be defiled even by the observances of what is opposed to the *Vedas* and the ordinary practices, as one who is independent of the law of *karma*; the Śaivites as Śiva; the Vaiṣṇavites as *Puruṣottama*; those versed in the *Purāṇas* as the paternal Grandfather; those versed in the sacrifices as the Sacrificial Person; the *Saugatas* (Buddhists) as the Omniscient; the *Digambaras* (Jains) as one free from obstruction; the *Mīmaṁsakas* as one who is enjoined in the *Vedas* as deserving worship; the *Cārvākas* (Materialists) as one established according to the secular usage; the Logicians as one endowed with all attributes; in short, whom even the artisans worship as the *Viśvakarman*; when there is such a universal recognition of the Supreme Soul, how can there be doubt with regard to the existence of the adorable One (Śiva - God) whose mystery has in this manner been at all times recognised like caste, clan, list of ancestors, branch of the *Vedas* and family duties etc. What is there to be established? (*Nyāya-Kusmāñjali* 14. I-19. 2)

What is noteworthy in this passage is that Udayana considers the materialists and the defenders of the atheistic schools as believers in a Supreme Being. Whatever be the philosophical or theological reasons that prompted him to pen such a remarkable passage on the universality of the religious fact and of men's implicit acceptance of God, it is enough for us to affirm that in spite of the spread of atheism and the explicit rejection of God, there is still an implicit acceptance of the absolute inasmuch as all men search for an ultimate meaning. So to discuss the problem of God, or the problem of that Reality which alone can in the last analysis give a direction, purpose, meaning to our lives and to our history is not an idle or an anachronistic task.

In the three chapters of this short work we intend to discuss the problem of God as faced, reflected upon and articulated by two medieval thinkers. Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274) was an Italian, hailed from a noble family, left all to become a poor Dominican monk, studied in France and Germany, taught in Paris and in the study houses of his religious family, wrote voluminously in Latin and finally died in his middle age. He inherited the Platonic — Augustinian tradition of philosophical and theological thought, yet he immersed himself in Aristotle as he received the Master's writing

from the Arab thinkers and as interpreted to him by his teacher, Albert the Great. But whatever Thomas touched, he changed. Aristotle and Augustine were infused with new insights.

Śrī Madhvācārya (1238 — 1317?) was born near Udipi, India. He came from a pious family following the *Bhāgavata* tradition and embraced the life of a wandering ascetic. Today he is regarded as the founder of a new branch of Vaiṣṇavism, which according to him was the religion of the *Ṛg Veda Saṁhitā* itself. He inherited the religious and philosophical traditions of India. Like Thomas, Madhva was an innovator. He certainly changed from inside many of the Śāṁkhya, Vedānta and Vaiṣṇava concepts with his insights into reality.

Thomas knew nothing about Indian religions or Indian thought, though he had some knowledge of Islam. Madhva never alludes to Christian or Islamic religious or philosophical thought in his writings, though pockets of Christians and vast numbers of Muslims lived in India during his life-time. The attempts to prove that Madhva was influenced by Christian or Islamic doctrines have failed upto now.

We cannot deny that these two thinkers came from different religious traditions, embraced different world views and experienced, reflected upon and expressed reality in different thought-forms. Yet they in their discussion on the Supreme Reality seem to reach certain similar views. Of course both were religious men, men devoured by the passion for God and religion. Both were theologians, not in the sense that they accepted blindly superstitious or unhealthy dogmas, but in the genuine sense that they believed in God and in His gracious self-gift to men. They were convinced that systematic God-talk was possible. Both were exegetes of the word that came from the Supreme Light. Certainly Thomas and Madhva differ widely in their conception of revelation.

St. Thomas makes an explicit distinction between theology and philosophy. For him theology is the logos, word on God. It is God-Talk. But it is a man of faith's express and strenuous hearing of God's revelation and his methodical systematic and conceptual striving to understand — howsoever little that understanding of the

mystery of God may be — the self revealing God. Theology is also the reflective development and the articulation of his faith-experience. Revelation is understood by Thomas as the self-disclosure or self-manifestation in word and deed of a personal, loving, omnipotent God. Faith is man's free acceptance of God's revelation especially, the revelation in Christ. *Philosophy* on the other hand, is the inquiry man makes into the deepest roots of reality with the help of reason. To Thomas, Philosophy appears as a systematic, genuine explanation of reality as reality, which explanation is rigorously demonstrable, justifiable by reason alone. So when Thomas speaks as a philosopher his demonstrations alone are under discussion, and it matters little whether the thesis he upholds has a faith dimension or not. He never introduces faith into his arguments. Into philosophical reflection he never brings in revelation. So for Thomas between philosophy and theology even when these two bear upon the same subject matter e.g., God, there is a strict formal distinction, because the principles of demonstration are different. Theology places its principles in the articles of faith. Philosophy on the other hand asks reason alone what it can tell us about reality, including God. Faith can never give up authority, the authority of the self-revealing God as its proof. Faith can never be reasoned out, though it is reasonable. Reason however, cannot give up demonstration or rational proof and appeal to authority or to purely subjective principles which can never be demonstrated. St. Thomas never held the view that what is or can be known by reason could not be revealed. "There is nothing to stop the same things from being treated by the philosophical disciplines in so far as they are knowable by the light of natural reason and by another science (theology) in so far as they are knowable by the light of divine revelation". (S.T. Ia, I ad. 2m)

The Indian thought tradition certainly knew the distinction between *śruti* and reason usually expressed by the more technical term '*anumāna*' — inference. Whether revelation was considered as the words of the Supreme Person, or the self-utterence of the uncreated, eternal and unchangeable word, it was non-human, a reality that irrupted into the life of man. The modern Hindu idea that revelation is nothing but the manifestation of the inner most layer of the human consciousness finds very little substantiation in tradition

except in certain passages of the *Upaniṣads* or in their interpretations. Those Indian schools which speak of strict Vedic non-personalism consider the eternal words and their objects as the transcendent ground. The vedic words are mediated through the vision of the sages and their oral communication. In Indian thought, except in our modern and contemporary period we do not find a distinction between philosophy and theology being made by any thinker. The Indian view of reality and of human knowing was more holistic. Madhva too forms part of this tradition. Philosophical arguments are placed side by side with the appeal to the authority of Scriptures, by all the Indian Ācāryas.

Both Madhva and Thomas were realists, pluralists and theists. For both the simplest hypothesis to explain the fact that thoughts agree upon things was to assume that their common point of reference was things themselves. According to them, we, human beings are not shut within our own being; we can really become (know) other realities. Both were critically convinced that men could really reach truth and that truth was ultimately objectivity, or correspondence of our knowing mind with the object of knowledge. Thomas and Madhva also taught that the mind of man was not imprisoned within the sensible world, but that it could ascend up to the highest reality on which all the gradations of beings and the inter-relationships and order among them depend. These two thinkers were aware that certain fundamental principles derived from the very structure of reality governed the universe of beings and the process of our knowing, the denial of which would make the whole of existence and of human conduct a sheer contradiction. Both these thinkers, in their conception of the Supreme Being, of man and of God-man relationship were personalists. The above doctrines and convictions were not accepted by them on hearsay or purely on the authority of some one else or in a pre-critical naive manner. Both have reached these basic teachings after a rigorous analysis of their experiences, study of the past thinkers and strict application of the human mind to the basic problems of life and reality.

But in spite of these similarities there also are radical differences between these two great thinkers. Their anthropologies, their very conceptions of God and of the world, their thought-forms and world views do differ and differ widely. The reasons for these differences have to

be sought in their respective traditions, heritage, fundamental experiences and the conceptual systems available to them. In the course of these pages we hope to lay bare some of these factors. But the notewothy point is that in spite of these differences they could reach certain conclusions which are so similar.

A last point that should find a place here is this: it is tacitly and widely accepted that medieval thinkers whether of Europe or of India have nothing much to contribute or to offer to us contemporary men of science and culture. It is often assumed that their general outlook, ways of thinking and views on the world, man and the Absolute are today obsolete. Their philosophical ideas and systems have passed away with the theocentric culture to which they belonged. They belonged to a metaphysical age. We on the other hand belong to the scientific age.

Such a blanket condemnation and rejection of everything medieval is unworthy of us, citical men. What is called for is a critical study of the medieval period and a sifting revaluation of its thought. Medieval Europe and India have said a great deal that is of permenent value. We have to rediscover these riches and make them actual and creative for our times. On no other reality have medieval Indian and European thinkers reflected with such depth, sharpness of focus and relentlessness of the earnestly seeking mind as on God. So a contact and encounter with and reflection on and articulation of the mystery of the Supreme Being as experienced and expressed by them will certainly be enriching for us and will throw some light on our and humanity's present zigzag search for a brighter future.

I

(A)

EXISTENCE OF GOD

St. Thomas, Preliminary Remarks

(1) In thomistic thought man is a spiritual-material being. He is neither pure spirit nor pure matter; he is spirit in matter. In spite of his unity in existence, he is a composite being; composed of essence and existence and the essence itself is again composed of matter and form. Thomas reaches these conclusions not through an *a priori*

deduction or through tradition but through a rigorous analysis of man's activity which springs from and hence manifests the nature of man. Perfectibility and perfection, potentiality and actuality are inscribed into the nature and activity of man. Man's nature is therefore, such that the proper object of his intellect in this life is the intelligibility incarnate in material things.(S.Th. Ia lxxxiv 7) The being which we directly apprehend is the being of material realities surrounding us. Human knowledge does not start with innate ideas or *a priori* notions. Fundamental notions and principles are derived from the experience of and reflection upon the experience of concrete realities. As a philosopher Thomas was convinced of the union of and interaction between act and potency in all beings except in God who, alone is pure act, pure perfection.

(2) From the philosophical analysis of our and humanity's experience we do know, thinks Thomas, that we have no innate idea or intuition of God. Since we hear the holy name of God from childhood we might get the false impression that we have some innate knowledge of God (Con. Gent 1: 10–12).

No one who knows the nature of God, can deny that he is himself is the most intelligible of all realities. He is being itself and pure intelligibility. But this does not mean that to our intelligence this Supreme Intelligibility is immediately evident. It is true that God is present in all things. But that presence is not directly apprehended by us (S. Th. Ia ii. 1). Again, God is the source and the last end in achievement of our natural desire for happiness. Still it does not follow that he comes first in the content of consciousness. (De Trint. I. 3 ad 4). If the idea of God's existence were implanted in the minds of men and hence self evident to all, there would then be no room for atheism. Yet the Psalmist says: "The fool said in his heart, there is no God" (Ps. 13(14) I). In fact many Christian thinkers including Thomas' own illustrious contemporary, Bonaventure believed that God himself had implanted in the minds of all the idea of a Supreme Being, greater than which cannot be conceived. To reject this venerable opinion called for philosophical courage.

(3) Already before Thomas some thinkers, especially Anselm desired to discover a simple yet evident and irrefutable proof for

the existence of God. Anselm's ontological proof was the fruit of this search. In his Proslogion, Anselm formulates the proof thus: "We believe that you (god) are something than which nothing greater can be conceived ..and certainly that than which nothing greater can be conceived cannot exist only in the intellect. For if it exists only in the intellect, it can also be conceived to exist in reality, which is greater. Hence there undoubtedly exists something than which nothing greater can be conceived and in the intellect and in reality." We can put this argument into a syllogism: "The greatest conceivable being exists in the mind and in reality. God is the greatest conceivable reality. Therefore, he exists in reality."

Anselm does admit that the notion of God as the greatest conceivable being is given to us in faith. Once faith reveals such a notion of God to us, then by an analysis of this notion, we can through reason reach the actual existence of God. The ontological argument was adapted and defended by such diverse thinkers as Bonaventure, Descartes, Leibnitz and Hegel. It was on the other hand rejected by Gaunilon, a contemporary of Anselm and later by Thomas Locke, and Kant.

According to Thomas, it is not true to say that in the minds of all, the word, God always stands for the highest conceivable being. Some have thought of God in material terms. Even granting that the word God signifies the highest conceivable reality, it does necessarily follow that he actually exists. Mental existence or the idea of existence is necessarily involved in the notion of the highest being. But actual existence is quite another matter. "It cannot be urged that such a reality must exist in reality, unless we concede that there is in reality a being than which nothing greater can be conceived, and this is not assumed by those who deny the existence of God" (S. Th. Ia II. 1). In other words, Thomas is arguing that from the ideal order, there is no necessary passage to the real order.

(4) It is good to bear in mind that Thomas' exposition of the proofs for the existence of God was adapted to the circumstances of his time and was deeply influenced by the sources out of which he derived them (proofs). So the famous five proofs as given in the first part of the Summa Theolica should not be detached from their

context and presented as independent proofs. It is also good to remember that the five ways as a whole are found in a theological work. For Thomas, theology as a science is a dialogue between faith and reason. Surely, in the Summa, he has a question about our natural knowledge of the existence of God. But this question is not introduced and discussed as a pure philosophical problem for its own philosophical interests. In the Summa, Thomas discusses the existence of God in the interest of sound theology and against the background of the theological views of his time, such as innatism and intuitionism. It is certain that Thomas was convinced that reason could through its own power, i. e., without the aid of faith, reach the knowledge of the existence of God. Since Thomas' aim is the theological, the justification of faith before the tribunal of one's own and humanity's conscience, we need not expect him to be eleborate or detailed in the exposition of the proofs, nor painstaking in drawing out their many implications.

(5) Rejecting the approach of thinkers who hold the view that God's existence was self evident to all or *a priori* demonstrable Thomas taught that the only way open to man to reach the existence of the Supreme Being was *a posteriori* demonstration. Any valid argument for the existence of God must begin with the existence of the things. Through a philosophical analysis of and reflection on the activity and nature of things we daily encounter, we show that they are effects, which necessarily demand the existence of a being who is the uncaused cause of their existence. We have to demonstrate that the beings we immediately know, are incapable of explaining their own existence. They and the whole chain of such beings show their insufficiency or contingence. Hence they do demand a reality which is self-sufficient, and capable of positing these beings in existence.

As mentioned above, one of the basic points of Thomistic epistemology is that our knowledge of the things of this world is prior to our knowledge of God. Our knowledge of the existence of God is posterior to our knowledge of the existence of things. Ontologically, that is, in the order of existence, God is prior to all things. All things come from him. But in the logical order, in the order of our

knowledge, the visible things are prior. Thomas does not argue starting from the premise that the things we see are effects. Effects presuppose a cause is a tautology. Through the experience of change, imperfections, limitations and the palpable insufficiency of things, the effect and contingent character of things are established. This is the reason why Thomas can say that things as they reveal themselves demand an absolute ground, a necessary and uncaused being.

It is in his approach to human knowledge we see the "empiricist" side of Thomas thought. By empiricism we do not mean the positivist philosophy that denies the existence of anything supersensible, but the critically established view that all human knowledge begins with sense experience though it does not end with it.

(6) Today many Thomists admit that the proofs for the existence of God as conceptual, thematic articulations and formulations somehow find their significance and power from the lived, unthematic implicit experience of the Absolute. In every question and affirmation of man, in every human experience of being and of the movement of being, the Absolute is implicitly affirmed. So for Thomas and Thomists, the proofs for the existence of God do not mediate to us the knowledge of a reality hithertofore, completely unknown. Nor do they bring to our awareness a reality completely neutral to or outside of us. Man unknowingly or knowingly, in the unity of his existence and of his freedom is ever living and acting within the background of the Absolute. The proofs take the ordinary human experiences of reality. Conditioned as these experiences are, they do necessarily point to an unconditioned being. The very existence of the experience and the reality to which it points demand an absolute ground for their existence. The point of departure of the proofs is not a concept or an abstract idea, but realities as they impose themselves on our reflective consciousness. The question we ask is the condition of the possibility of the very existence of experience and of the realities experienced.

The proofs for the existence of God are not mathematical deductions immediately carrying conviction to all. A God who can be conceptually and mathematically established is no God. A concept is not the living God, the mystery of all mysteries. So

the proofs are meant as aids, and articulated expression of an already lived experience through which all men of good will are brought to a dialogue on the most important of all quests, the quest after God. Those who think that they have a knowledge of God that is articulate must come to a dialogue with others who either do not possess such express knowledge or who deny the possibility of the experience of God. Thomas did think that all men including agnostics, provided they are fully open, could in theory at first reach a critical conviction about the realities surrounding them, their radical insufficiency and then the knowledge of God's existence involved in the existence of these realities. Even the staunch believer in the existence of God, must somehow establish before the tribunal of his conscience, the reasonableness of his faith.

Thomas never claimed that all men should first come to know the existence of God through rational proofs. Nor did he ever claim that most people who believe in God have reached this conviction through metaphysical arguments. His basic position is that any one who is capable of open and sustained reflection and who question the roots of the experienced realities can come to know the existence of God.

Today there are many Thomists who openly speak of the incompleteness of some or of all the five proofs offered by Thomas. Cafferena writes in the Sacramentum Mundi (Vol. II. God) "Today we can no longer rest content with the quiet conclusion of St. Thomas' five ways ...(this being everyone calls God - nor even with the sheer demonstration of the 'Ipsum esse Subsisten')." So in exposing the five ways of Thomas we should not forget the many criticisms levelled against them.

(7) It is obvious that Thomas did not live after Kant or after the anti-metaphysical logical positivists. So in his writings we do not find either a reply to Kant's criticism of speculative reason or an express defence of metaphysics. But one thing is clear. Thomas believed in the power of the human mind to reach being as being and hence he was convinced of the possibility and value of metaphysics. On the one hand Thomas holds the principle: there is nothing in the intellect which was not before in the senses. Yet he equally defends

the view that the intellect can reach out to all beings. To understand this position we must explain one or two basic points of Thomas' thought. Objects whether spiritual or material are known only insofar as they are being or in act. The intellect considered in itself is the faculty of being. It is because the *human intellect* is embodied and hence dependent on the senses, it must start from the sensible things. But this human state does not destroy the natural orientation of the intellect to being as being. If the corporeal objects bear a discernible relation to reality that transcends them, then intellect can know the existence of that reality. Further, insofar as the material objects reveal the character of the transcendent, the intellect can attain some knowledge of its nature. So Thomas defends at least indirectly the possibility of metaphysics. Unless one accepts the possibility and validity of metaphysics, there is no possibility of proving the existence of God.

Proofs for the existence of God

Much has been written for and against the thomistic proofs for the existence of God. So to discuss the classical five ways in any exhaustive manner here is an impossibility. We shall take the text of the proofs as found in the Summa Theologica of Thomas though references to his other works will not be neglected. For detailed discussions of the five ways I refer the reader to the specialised studies of Garrigou Lagrange, Gilson, Sertillanges and others.

First way: From Movement (Motion)

"The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain and evident to our senses that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is moved is moved by another, for nothing can be moved except it is in potentiality, to that towards which it is moved, whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot as fire, makes wood which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects.

For what is actually cannot simultaneously be potentially hot, but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e., that it should move itself. Therefore whatever is moved must be moved by another. If that by which it is moved be itself moved then this also must be moved by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover and consequently, no other mover, seeing that subsequent movers move only as much as they are moved by the first mover, as the staff moves only because it is moved by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, not moved by another and this everyone understands to be God" (S. Th. Ia. II. 3; Cont. Gent. I.13).

The sources of this way are Aristotle, Maimonides and Albert the Great. The proof as it stands here and especially as it is elaborated in the Contra Gentiles reveals the Aristotelean cosmographic background. The example 'fire and wood' is physical; but it exemplifies the metaphysical principle of act and potency. In Aristotle the moving cause 'cause movens' is not the same as the the efficient cause, 'cause efficiens'. According to Aristotle the unmoved mover, moves other beings (intellectual substances) by the exercise of its finality. St. Thomas in the Summa Theologica does not specify the type of causality exercised by the first mover. But in the Compendium Theologiae (I. C3) he identifies the 'causa movens' with 'causa efficiens'.

The proof starts with the experience of some change. Neither does Thomas affirm that all things change, nor does he accept any particular scientific view of change or movement. Change or movement means the passage of being from potentially to aceuality. Movement is an incomplete act, an actualization of what is potential. So change is a dependent actuality requiring something else already in act to explain it. In this sense Thomas accepts the Aristotelean axiom: "Whatever is moved is moved by another". Motion is an effect that depends initially on a cause. Also without the cause here and now causing, motion cannot exist. This is the reason why Thomas denies the possibility of a n infinite series of movers in an immediately subordinated movement. In other words infinite

regress is impossible in moved movers. Therefore, in the end we arrive at an unmoved mover, a first mover "and all understand that this is God".

Second way : Efficient Causality

"The second way is from the nature of efficient cause. In the world of sensible things we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself, for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause whether the intermediate cause be several or one only. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes, all of which is plainly false. Therefore, it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause to which everyone gives the name God" (S.Th. Ia 2.3).

The proof as proposed by Thomas has already been suggested by Aristotle in the second book of Metaphysics C-2. It was used by Avicenna, Allan of Lille and Albert the Great. In the things men observe, they perceive the evidence of an order of efficient causes, says Thomas. Succession of activities and of beings and newness of being form part of our experience. Reflection on this experience manifests to us the principle of causality and offers to the proof metaphysical depth. In an ordered series of efficient causes, infinite regress is impossible. If the effect is there, the first cause must also be there.

Thomas states also that nothing can be the cause of itself, for in order to be this, it would have to exist before itself. So we have to admit the existence of a first cause "whom all call God".

Third way : Possibility and Necessity

"The third way is taken from possibility and necessity and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated and corrupted and consequently

it is possible for them always to be and not to be. But it is impossible for them always to exist, for that which can not-be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything can not-be, then at one time nothing was in existence. Now, if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence because that which does not exist begins to exist only through something already existing. Therefore if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist, and thus even now nothing would be in existence — which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something, the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another or not, now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their existence caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore, we cannot but admit the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God (S. Th. Ia. 2.3; Con. Gent. I.15).

For the formulation of the third way, Thomas is indebted to Maimonides, who in his turn took over the proof from Avicenna. The proof starts with an experience: the coming into being and the perishing of thing. This fact of experience reveals the contingency or non-necessary character of their existence. If their existence were necessary, they would always have existed and so they would neither come into being nor pass away. This is the reason why Thomas introduces a false hypothesis unto the proof "If everything can not-be, then at one time nothing was in existence." Such an assumption would lead us to the absurd conclusion that nothing exists now. To the mind of Thomas the very idea of a universe with only possible beings is a contradiction. So he argues that there must exist a necessary being, because of whom other beings exist, If there were no necessary being nothing at all would exist.

The structure of the three above proofs is similar. The first way is based on the moving cause, which for Thomas stands for efficient cause. The second proof specifically treats of the efficient cause and its order. The third way deals with the contingent and necessary character of existence. In all the three ways Thomas

says that an infinite series is impossible. As mentioned above, what is denied is the possibility of an infinite series in the order of actually depending causes i. e., of an infinite vertical series. The possibility of an infinite series in the ontological order of dependence is denied. In the S. Th. Ia. 46. 2 ad 7, Thomas himself clearly deals with this problem.

Thomas' conclusion: this (first mover) all understand as God; the first efficient cause all men speak of as God; the necessary being all call God, certainly appears hasty. That there is only one first mover, first efficient cause and necessary being and that this one being is a living, perennial existent are only implicitly proved in the arguments. In other parts of his works, he deals with the immateriality, oneness etc., of God. What is said in outline in the proofs is that the God who is recognised by all believers is the first mover, the first efficient cause and the necessary being.

Fourth way: Degrees of Perfection

"The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But more or less are predicated of different things according as they resemble in their different ways; something which is the maximum, as the thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and consequently, something which is most being; for those things that are greatest, in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in the Metaphysics. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus, as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is the cause of all hot things, as is said in the same book. Therefore, there must also be something which is to all beings the case of their being, goodness and every other perfection and this we call God" (S. Th. Ia. 2. 3; Con. Gent. I. 13; De Potentia III. 5).

This fourth way is suggested by some observations of Aristotle's Metaphysics (2.I: 4,4) and is found to a great extent in the expositions of Augustine and Anselm. In some measure, Thomas is indebted to Platonic thought in the formulation of this way, is now accepted by all. We spontaneously experience that some things are better

or nobler than others. In the argument, Thomas takes into consideration much more the transcendental perfections, involving analogy, such as goodness, truth, nobility, and beauty that admit of no interior limitations. Thomas' argument is: "whatever flows from the nature of a being cannot be had according to more or less, i.e., in a limited fashion". The things we experience in the world are found to be good, true, noble etc., in greater or lesser degrees. So they must have received these perfections from another. What is proved by this way is not the existence of a relatively best being. In as much as the transcendental perfections and being are convertible, Thomas' argument goes to establish the existence of a supreme being, who is the cause of all limited perfections in others. The beings which manifest greater or lesser degree of perfection are contingent, non-necessary beings. Thomas accepts here the Platonic idea of participation. But he connects participation with the Aristotlean principle, "whatever is the greatest in any kind (genus) of being is the cause of all that are of this kind." Basing himself on the philosophy of being, Thomas understands that the experienced degrees of transcendental perfection could lead us to the existence of a Supreme Existence, who is the cause of all perfections.

Fifth way: Way of Finality

"The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things, which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously, but designedly. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being by whom all natural things are directed to their end, and this being we call God" (S. Th. Ia. 2.3; Cont. Gent. I. 13; Ibid. 42).

This is an argument hallowed by tradition. The orderly operation of nature is an evident experience. What Thomas demands from this experience is the sufficient reason for the uniform and consistent attainment of goals by beings. He does not deny that there are instances of failures, which can be explained by accidental interferences. Such interferences have their own proper finality. But the

overwhelming evidence is for order and finality. Is it reasonable to attribute it all to chance? This way is formally based on the notion of the government and guidance of natural things and not on design as such. Just as the arrow is directed every minute of its movement (from inception to end) by an intelligent being, so the inorganic objects' operations are directed by an intelligent agent. Orderly movement requires an intelligence, for order is the arrangement of things in a definite series according to a norm and for a purpose.

In the Summa Contra Gentiles, the argument has a slightly different nuance (Con. gent. I.42). When many things with different and even opposing qualities cooperate towards the realization of one order or harmony, this must proceed from an intelligent cause or providence. In the Summa Theologica the internal finality of the inorganic object is stressed. This proof first of all leads us to the existence of an intelligent ordainer of all natural things. But to show that this ordainer is God, we need further reflection and argumentation. In the mind of Thomas, end and good are convertible terms. That natural things act for an end is seen from the fact that they act in such a way as to obtain what is good for themselves. To act for an end, to act in order to obtain a good is a distinct way of being. So the intelligent cause from whom the internal purposiveness and the coordinated finality of the operations of natural things depend is not merely the ordainer or governor of the universe, but the cause of being. This line of argumentation is implicit in the fifth way and hence he could say: "this being we call God."

Remarks

Summing up the value of these five proofs, Banes, one of the 17th century commentators of Thomas says: "All these arguments, taken together, do not immediately and explicitly prove that God exists, (Deum esse) and much less that God is the most perfect being than which nothing more perfect can be conceived..... but they most efficaciously prove that, in nature, there are found certain perfections and properties (prime mover, prime cause, necessary being etc...) that can belong to no one else than to God; therefore virtually and implicitly, these arguments prove the existence of God." (Scholastica Commentaria pp. 114-5). The five ways as they are set

down in the words of Thomas, especially in the Summa Theologica form a sort of preamble to this total theological concern. Hence they are not to be torn out of their context and presented to others as fully elaborated and once for all and only valid modes of man's rational approach to God. The criticism of some of the present day Thomists needs to be seriously listened to. The contemporary defenders of the proofs for the existence of God must face the difficulties raised by Kant and the Neo-Positivists on the one hand and by the more spiritually oriented thinkers like Bergson and theologians like Barth who deny the very possibility of natural theology. Thomas' contribution to the history of humanity's thought consists in his insistence on the capacity of the human mind to open itself out and reach the Infinite. He places both man and God into the matrix of a philosophy of being. This overarching philosophy of being brings God, world and man together. It makes the world and man, a mirror of God. It safeguards the limitations of the human condition and the infinite horizon of man's mind and will. It permits God to remain incomprehensible in himself, though his infinite existence is mirrored in the finite existences. Only within a philosophy of being — open, dynamic and analogical — can we really pose the problem of God and find him.

(B)

Śrī Madhvācārya, Preliminary Remarks

(1) In the Hindu tradition of the middle ages, the problem of the existence of God was not posed in the acute manner in which our contemporaries pose it. In the writings of Madhva we never come across the question: Is there an Absolute Being? The majority of Madhva's contemporaries, relying on the sacred texts took the existence of God for granted, just as the Europeans of Thomas' time accepted God as part of their inherited world view.

(2) The question however, now the Absolute Being was known, that is, whether God is, known through reasoning as the Naiyāyikas maintained, or through the sacred texts as the Vedāntins asserted, was hotly debated during the time of Madhva. In other words: through which means of knowledge do we come to know God?

(3) According to the Mādhva understanding of Advaita, the Advaitins taught that Brahman was known only indirectly through Vedic testimony. The infinite and unspeakable Absolute can never be expressed directly by words. In order to oppose this advaitic view, Madhva had to examine very closely the question of the knowability of reality in general and of God in particular.

(4) In Dvaita-Vedānta the essence of true knowledge does not consist in non-contradictedness but in objectivity. The apprehension of an object as it is, is the essential note of true knowledge. True knowledge makes the objects as it is, its object. (Yathāvasthitaṁ jñeyaṁ viṣayīkaroti — *Pramāṇalakṣaṇa Ṭīkā*). Reality is that which is the object of knowledge (*Tattvodyota*). Knowledge in Madhva's thought is necessarily related to space and time. Reality in its essence does not imply immutability or eternity. This does not mean that all realities are non-eternal or mutable.

According to Dvaita-Vedānta only reality and non-reality are known to us. There is no proof whatever to show the existence of something different from reality and unreality. Madhva rejects the advaitic view that only the Supreme Being is really real and that other realities pertain to a lower level or levels of being. For him both God and the world are real. Man can know all realities including God.

(5) For Madhva, the problem of God was tied up with the question of the name of God. Is the Absolute Being Viṣṇu or Śiva? The Vaiṣṇavites affirm that Viṣṇu alone is the originator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. For the Vaiṣṇavites of Madhva's time, it was not enough to establish the existence of the Supreme Being. This Supreme Being is Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu alone must also be established. Such an outlook on the problem of God was brought about by the sectarian controversies of those times.

Viṣṇu is knowable

"I always worship Nārāyaṇa who transcends Lakṣmī and the individual souls and who is known through the true scriptures." (*Viṣṇutattvavinirṇaya* (VTV.) No. 1.; *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* - I. i. 1. (B.S. Bh.)) "Viṣṇu can only be known through the sacred texts and by the devotees alone" (B.S. Bh. I. i. 3.). He who has not

studied the Vedas cannot understand the Great One. So according to Madhva, the sacred texts themselves teach us that the Supreme Being is knowable.

Reality is that which can become the object of knowledge, is the very definition of what is real. If anyone were to assert that the Absolute Being is unknowable, then he implicitly denies that Brahman is real. Again the very first *sūtra* of the *Brahma-Sūtra*, enjoins on all an inquiry into Brahman. This injunction takes it for granted that the object of inquiry (Brahman) is knowable. If Brahman were unknowable, an inquiry into such a reality would be meaningless.

The view that Brahman is knowable seems to conflict with some sacred texts which declare that from the highest bliss, words together with the mind recoil. Brahman is not sound, has not sound for its property; it is not known by sound, by touch or by taste. Brahman is said to be the unmanifest, the unspeakable. If we take these Vedic statements earnestly, then how can we say that Brahman is knowable?

As far as Madhva is concerned, such statements do not say that Brahman is utterly unknowable. They only state that the Supreme Being is not fully known or fully comprehended. The wise men see the golden mount *Meru*, yet they do not see it fully. So also Brahman cannot be fully described, reasoned out or known (B. S. Bh. I. i. 5).

So for Madhva, Viṣṇu is an object of our knowledge, though he can never be fully comprehended. He therefore, rejects the agnostic position since it contradicts the very nature of reality and knowledge and since it opposes the Vedic testimony.

Viṣṇu is not known by Perception

Perception (*pratyakṣa-jñāna*) arises out of the contact of the senses with the object. Such a sense-object contact is limited to the sphere of the sensible. The Absolute Being, which stands beyond the sphere of the sensible and outside the domain of the individual self cannot be reached by perception. Madhva writes: Viṣṇu cannot be reached by sense perception. (V T V. No. 3). The two great

commentators, Trivikrama and Jayatīrtha say that sense perception unaided by revelation cannot attain Viṣṇu. The final and immediate vision of Viṣṇu which the liberated enjoy arises because the unmanifest and subtle Lord through his favour manifests himself to the devoted soul. So such a vision cannot be termed simple sense perception.

Reasoning and our Knowledge of Viṣṇu

"Viṣṇu cannot be apprehended by mere reasoning" (Ibid No. 2). This is a rather common assertion of Madhva. Jayatīrtha says that the word 'mere' (*kevala*) is added in order to show that reasoning unaided by *śruti* cannot reach the Lord. In another work Madhva writes: "Reasoning cannot in any way make known the Lord of the world" (*Anuvyākhyāna* No. 116). We can through reasoning neither prove the existence of first cause, nor can we indicate that this first cause is God, thinks Jayatīrtha (*Nyāya Sudhā*).

Viṣṇu's Existence cannot be proved by inference because the opposite also can be proved by the same means. The Dvaitins reject the Nyāya position which says that God's existence can be proved by inference. He who ignores the sacred texts does not know Viṣṇu, is the teaching of *śruti* itself.

In the writings of Madhva we come across certain passages which give us the impression that reasoning can offer us some knowledge of God. In the *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya*, Madhva quotes a long passage from *Mokṣadharma*. "The seed, pulse, the seed of the banyan tree, butter, the process of manuring, reminiscence of a previous life, the load stone, the draught of water, the dissolution of the body into its elements after death . are certain means (to infer the existence of spiritual beings) and thus the materialistic position is refuted" (B. S. Bh. I. i. 3). The context of this passage is the refutation of the materialist school, which affirms that we have only sense knowledge. But the principle of causality, the imperceptible growth of a tree from a watered seed, and other such cognitions are not derived directly through perception. Over and above perception we have reasoning and testimony as valid means of knowledge. But neither Madhva nor his commentators take up the implied idea of causality and argue to the existence of God.

In the Mādhva refutation of the Śāṅkhya and Cārvāka views on the production of the universe, the principles of causality and order in the world are used in order to show that unconscious matter could not have been the cause of the world (B. S. Bh. II. ii. 1; *Tattvadipikā* p. 195). Again Madhva's statement that dependent and limited souls could not have produced the world, is based on the implicit idea that contingent beings could never be the first cause (B. S. Bh. II. i. 25).

Because of these statements, Von Glasenapp thought that according to Madhva, the existence of God could be proved by reason, though his nature could be grasped only with the aid of *śruti* (Madhva's Philosophie des Viṣṇu-Glaubens, Bonn Lepzig, 1923, pp. 27-8). But the truth of the matter is that Madhva never made such a distinction between the existence of Viṣṇu and his essence or nature. No one can doubt that in the writings of Madhva, there are elements of proofs for the existence of God. But he has never developed them. Jayatīrtha however, says in one place: Viṣṇu though known only in a general way by means of perception and reasoning, is known well only through the sacred texts (VTV. Ṭīkā p. 2). But he writes also: Viṣṇu who is absolutely different from matter, from the souls and from Lakṣmī is known as distinct from all (*viśiṣṭatayā*) only through the sacred texts (ibid.). This means that God as God can be known only with the aid of *śruti*.

The Dvaita attitude to reasoning and revelation and the respective relation of these two sources of knowledge as regards our knowledge of God may be seen from the analysis of *kārya*. Jayatīrtha says that the notion of *kārya* can mean either that which is desired (the end or object of our desire) or the means or the action to reach the desired end. In analysing the notion of *kārya* we find that at first, there is assuredly the knowledge of the possibility of attaining a good; then there is the willing, afterwards the effort and employment of energy. All these different stages occur in a person striving after a good. Nevertheless, one does not come across in any part of the world an object which could claim for itself the whole of human activity or striving. That which is supreme is loved supremely. That which is excellent is that which is unconditioned. So the only good or end that can awake in us the totality of willing and hence can claim for itself all our striving, is the supreme good.

The inner dynamism of the human activity could be made into a valid proof for the existence of God. But Jayatīrtha's conclusion is quite in keeping with the main Dvaita position. If the *Vedas* had not told us that the Supreme Good exists, it would remain a mere possibility. But since the *Vedas* tell us that it exists, the existence of God is not a pure hypothesis (*Nyāya-sudha* - Text quoted by Mle. Siauve. La Doctrine de Madhva. p. 79). From these and other statements, it is clear that the Dvaitins do not accept the possibility that reasoning can give us the knowledge of the existence of God.

Refutation of the Proofs for the Existence of God

"God's existence cannot be proved by inference because the opposite also can be proved by inference. If it is argued that the world must have had a cause, because it is an effect just as a jar, which being an effect was produced by a potter; it is countered by contradictory inference to the effect that the world could not have been produced by a creator, because the world is not an effect according to our conception, just as the soul is not created by a cause like a potter. If it be objected that the counter inference is vitiated by the fact that it applies only to entities that are not effects like the self and not to the world as a whole, it can be answered with equal force, that the first inference is vitiated by the fault that it applies only to products like a jar manufactured by embodied beings and not to the world as a whole" (VTV. Nos. 62ff). Again Madhva writes: "An independent inference that is, an inference not aided by *śruti*, cannot prove the existence of God, because using the same method and with the same necessity one can show that the being (cause) in question is only human and not God. Reasoning is not capable of reaching the Lord of the universe" (AV. 114).

By these statements Madhva teaches that any reasoning which has its point of departure in the existence of the world can reach only an 'artisan' of the world similar to a human artisan. We can never prove that God is the cause of the world.

The reason why inference cannot offer us the knowledge of the existence of God is to be found in other texts. "An independent inference which pretends to make known the Supreme Lord is an

inference surpassing its limits. Such an inference would be like the statement 'horse has horns, sky has flowers, the barren woman has children' for they are realities" (ibid. 118-119). In all these statements the reason is heterogeneous to the conclusion.

One of the Nyāya arguments for the existence of God starts from the product character of the world. Using the principle of causality they affirm that this world, a product, must have a cause and that cause is God. Madhva on his side implicitly limits the principle of causality to the verifiable sphere of sensible realities. For him effects are pots and other objects produced by embodied beings. They are also immediately experienced as effects. The world as a whole and its relation to the Lord does not come under the sphere of the sensible. From the domain of the observed and observable we should not transfer the cause-effect relationship to the super-sensible.

Madhva would certainly admit that every effect has a cause. But he would question whether we can truly prove that the whole world is an effect. Moreover, we know only embodied causes such as potters and weavers. Such causes do not lead to anything beyond human and secondary causes.

From these few remarks it is clear that Madhva does not consider the principle of causality within the framework of a philosophy of being, but within the limited sphere of the particular and narrow idea of sensible being.

The argument that the world calls for an omniscient cause is dismissed by Madhva on the ground that it is not really valid. He would admit that the cause of the world knows the world. But the cause is omniscient is not proved at all.

It may not be quite in place to inquire into the reasons why Madhva did not accept the general Nyāya position regarding the proofs for the existence of God. I have dealt with them elsewhere (Gott, Welt, und Mensch beim Madhva, Ed. Puthiadam, Muenster, 1975, pp. 33 ff). In short we may say that his Vaiṣṇava, Vedāntic traditions and his conviction that Viṣṇu alone is the Supreme Lord might have prevented him from showing any sympathy to the so-called rational proofs.

In spite of what has been said, it is not to be supposed that reasoning is useless in our effort to know God. Once we come to know God through *śruti*, and when reasoning is supported by the sacred texts, then such a reasoning can be valid with regard to God. From *śruti* we know that the Lord is the cause, the sustainer and destroyer of the world. At this stage it is possible for us to apply the principle of causality and other categories to the realm of God and God-world relationship. In our ordinary reasoning, validity is derived from the observed invariable connection between the probans and the probandum. But in reasoning aided by *śruti*, the validity ultimately comes from *śruti* itself. So in the last analysis it is *śruti* which tells us that the world is an effect and Viṣṇu is the cause of all.

Conclusion

We have explored briefly and objectively the view of Thomas that the human mind though, with difficulty, can reach the knowledge of the existence of God without the aid of revelation. Through the things man sees he can reach up to God. On the other hand, Madhva explicitly affirms that man knows God only with the help of the sacred tradition. It is true that in the realistic system of Madhva, quite many elements of the proofs for the existence of God are found. But they have never been unified and ordered into systematic proofs.

To both Thomas and Madhva the human mind is capable of ascending up to God. But in Thomas' view the human mind has the necessary capacity to know the existence of God, provided it opens itself out to the depth dimension of things in the world. In Madhva's more Vedāntic and Vaiṣṇava tradition-formed opinion, *śruti* is necessary for man to reach the knowledge of God. Thomas is a 'moderate rationalist' thinking within the horizon of an overarching philosophy of being. Madhva on the other hand makes no clear cut distinction between philosophy and theology. As far as God is concerned, he thinks more in fideistic and traditionalistic terms. His philosophy is one of essences. The finite and the Infinite realities are not explicitly bridged by an analogical concept of being.

Today practically nowhere except in scholastic circles, the rather abstract metaphysical proofs of Thomas are seriously studied. Even

some scholastic thinkers consider the five ways as proposed by Thomas incomplete and non-conclusive. Nor are contemporary thinkers ready to embrace a fideistic-traditionalist position in our search to know the transcendent. On the other hand men cannot enter into serious dialogue with one another on the problem of God purely on the basis of a particular faith experience or sacred tradition. Unless the human intelligence is capable of positing the question of God and of moving towards an answer, however incomplete that answer may be, there will be no common meeting ground between different faiths and between men of faith and a-religious persons. On the other hand we are fully convinced today of the historicity and the history of all knowledge, including the knowledge of being. Both individual and collective knowledge is dynamic. A philosopher has certainly the right and duty to investigate the permanent and basic structures of reality and knowledge. But at the same time, if he wants to be relevent intelligible and effective, he must be conversant with the concerns of men and speak in terms of the present understnnding of oneself and of the world.

We cannot doubt that modern culture and thought involve a reinterpretation of men and his world, a transformation of the ordering of society and of the control over nature and a new sense of power and responsibility. Today's thought is man-centred. Thomistic proofs are object-centred or cosmos-centred as far as the emphasis is concerned. But since there is a shift from cultural classicism to a more empirical and man and history-centred view of culture, and since sociology and technology have put man as the immediate centre of the world, our quest after God should have an anthropocentric turn. In fact many modern theist philosophers move away from metaphysical argumentation in terms of cosmic design, or of the unmoved mover and embrace a critical approach founded on a verified thematisation of the operating subject. The experiencing, understanding and judging subject is challenged to experience the experiencing, understanding and judging subject, and to judge critically the correctness of one's understanding of oneself as an experiencing, understanding and judging centre. This is a challenge to self appropriation and the appropriation of the object in the knowing self. There is also a self appropriation at the level of moral consciousness and decision. It is in this critical and

reflexive self-appropriation, man comes to realise that his basic activities and hence his nature are sustained by an infinite horizon or absolute being. This proof might also appear too intellectual and abstract. In point of fact we live in an ambiguous world where no final proof one way or another is available and we either believe or disbelieve on the strength of such evidence as we can find. Certainly our stand should not be arbitrary.

The "anthropocentric turn" that has happened in the modern period has made man more 'meaning-conscious' as never before. Unless reality is trust-worthy, capable of sustaining and supporting us at the deepest level, there would be little ground for hope or any meaning in life. Man is looking for the meaning of his life and of human history. All men rich and poor implicitly or explicitly search for the true ground in reality itself of their inerradicable and ineffable confidence and hope in the final worth of our and of all existence and history. In our country with its palpable religiosity, rich pluralism, the appalling poverty and social injustices suffered by the majority and the indifference and self-sufficiency of the rich and the powerful, the search for meaning, the ground of hope, the final guarantee of freedom and the ultimate basis of unity has deep significance and urgency. What we modern Indians look for is not a being added to the world, or a knowledge pertaining to the edges and still unclosed gaps of our system of thought. So, God, who really and in the last analysis offers meaning to man and history is the central reality, the core question of all. Any reality, any meaning we experience, forces us to question and to search further. When we relentlessly continue our search, we willy nilly come to God and at the same time realise that at any moment of our search God is implicitly involved. One may find 'meaning' in accepting that ultimately everything is meaningless. Another shows himself ready to receive meaning and ultimate value from another source than his own calculations. In the last analysis the cogency of any proof for the existence of God depends on experience and decision. It is here the medieval Indian and European thought with its sincerity and earnestness to strive after a knowledge of the Transcendent can be an inspiration for us today.

II

THE NATURE OF GOD

(A)

St. Thomas

"The existence of a thing having been ascertained, the manner of its existence remains to be inquired into if we would know about its nature." (S. Th. Ia. III. Prologue). Through the five ways we have arrived at the knowledge of a being which is the first mover, the first cause of all, the necessary being, the highest being from which all other realities receive their perfections and order of activity. This being all call God. Though we know the existence of this being, we can never fully know its nature for God by definition is infinite "Neither Christian nor Non-Christian grasps the meaning of what God is in himself" (S. Th. Ia. XIII. 10 ad 5).

Nonetheless Thomas affirms: "We cannot be aware of a thing's existence without in some way, at least vaguely, perceiving what it is. Knowledge of existence implies some knowledge of nature" (De Trinitate VI. 3). Since God is the cause of all things and since it is the genus of efficient causes to produce effects somewhat like itself, we are sure that we know a little of God's nature (Con. Gent. I. 29). Though we say that we not only know that God exists, but also a 'little' of his nature still we have to demonstrate that we can have a glimpse into God's nature with the help of realities surrounding us. As we have remarked above, we have no intuition of God's essence. All our philosophical cognitions start with sense knowledge. The ideas we form ultimately are the results of reflection on our sense experience. Human language expresses ideas derived from experience. If these statements are true, then our language and ideas can operate only within the sphere of experience. God by definition exceeds the limits of our experience. So are our ideas applicable to him? Again, even if we know a 'little' of God's nature, is our human language capable of expressing that knowledge?

Thomas surely was a convinced fighter for the rights of the human intellect. But he was not a rationalist of the Hegelian type, over-confident of the power of reason. "The divine substance exceeds by its immensity every form which our intellect attains: and so we

cannot apprehend it by knowing what it is, but we have some notion of it by coming to know what it is not" (S. Con. Gent. 1:14). So for Thomas our knowledge of God consists in knowing more, what God is not than in knowing what he is. "Since we cannot know what God is, but rather what God is not, our method has to be mainly negative" (S. Th. Ia. III. Prologue). But before we take up this problem, we should point out the dangers into which a philosopher can fall in his attempt to reflect on God's nature.

Anthropomorphism and Agnosticism

Man is prone to think of God in human terms. To put God and man under the umbrella of univocal concepts either mythologically or phychologically is a constant danger. We often attribute to God our own feelings and reactions and judge him according to our standards. More intellectually, we do credit God with all the perfections of which we men have knowledge. Thus we reduce God to our level, though we might consider him greater than all men. Out of this type of anthropomorphism, there occurs also the alienation of man. He empties himself of all his greatness and perfections and places them in a being outside himself. Of course we do not want to take up here the problem raised by Feuerbach and the Marxists. They affirm that man by projecting his perfections outside of himself creates God. In order to avoid the danger of anthropomorphism, a philosopher has to constantly purify his concepts and pictures of God. But this process of purification leads us to the other extreme, *Agnosticism* which denies that we human being can know anything about the nature of God. Agnostics would accept that we can know the existence of God. Thomas with his distinctions and clarifications tries to stay clear of these two dangers. But the real issue Thomas faces now is: how do we come to know the nature of God?

Via Negationis = Way of Negation

Following the Christian tradition initiated by Pseudo—Dionysius under the influence of Neo-Platonism, Thomas makes liberal use of the way of negation. It consists in denying to God anything that belongs to finite, contingent beings as such. Thomas himself clearly explains this way: "In the case of created substances, which we can define, we first of all assign it to its genus, by which we know in general what it is and then we add the difference by which it is

distinguished from other things; but in the case of God we cannot assign him to a genus, since he transcends all genera and we cannot distinguish him from other beings by positive differences (per affimativas differentias). Though we cannot reach a clear idea of the nature of God, in the way we reach a clear idea of human nature, i.e., by a succession of positive and affirmative differentiations such as living, sensitive, animal, rational etc., still we can attain to some notion of his (God's) nature by the negative way, by a succession of negative differentiations. For example we say: God is not an accident, he is not corporeal etc. Thus by reduction or elimination we can obtain an idea of God that belongs to him alone (propria consideratio). This suffices to distinguish him from all other beings'' (Con. Gent. I. 14). By denying all the limitations found in creatures we are enabled to realise with greater and greater precision what God is not and what he possibly cannot be. Thus we can attain some knowledge of God.

When we deny certain predicates of God, it does not mean that he lacks the perfections contained in those predicates. As Thomas says: "haec non removentur ab eo propter ejus defectum sed quia superexcedit" (S. Th. Ia. 12. 12). God infinitely exceeds the limited perfections of the creatures. This we know from the fact that God is the first cause of all things. In this context it is necessary for us to understand Thomas' teaching on cause-effect relationship.

There are some effects which belong to the same order as the cause. Such effects once produced are equals of the causes. The father-son relationship belongs to this order. In this case, by knowing the nature of the effects, we can come to know the nature and powers of the cause.

There is another class of effects which lacks the powers and potentialities of their causes. Now starting from the knowledge of such effects we cannot really arrive at the knowledge of the nature of their causes. But from such effects we can arrive at the knowledge of the existence of the cause, but not its nature. The reason is to be sought in the fact that there is a disproportion between the nature of the effects and that of the cause. God is the unequal cause of all things (Con. Gent. I. 29).

But even in this case one is not left in complete agnosticism as to the nature and essence of the cause. The more we know of the nature of the effects and of their relation to the cause, the more insight we can have of the nature of the cause. The more we realise the disproportion between the effects and the causes, the more we understand how he (cause) is far removed from and transcends them. (Pseudo-Dionysius, De Divinis Nominibus. VII.4). Such is the learned ignorance (docta ignorantia) of philosophy and theology. Thomas does not want us to remain in intellectual inertia or lethargy. What Thomas desires is that a philosopher should make a positive effort to transcend all representations, and figurative descriptions of God. One needs genuine intellectual asceticism to assert that the summit of the human knowledge of God is that we do not know him. "They say that on reaching the term of our knowledge, we know God as unknown because our mind is found to have its supreme progress in knowledge when it kno ws that the essence of God is above all that which it can apprehend in this life, and thus although what God is, remains unknown, that he is, nevertheless is known" (S. Th. Ia. 2 ad I). But as hinted above between the effect and its unequal cause there is not merely 'unlikeness' but also 'likeness' (Con. Gent. I. 29). Between them there is some similitude but no adequation. (De Potentia III. 16 ad 7.) Using the negative way we can say that God is *not corporeal.* Corporeality implies act and potency, matter and form composition. God the unmoved mover, the first cause, therefore, must be above corporeality. Composition and potentiality are found only in effects, in contingent and limited beings. In Thomistic terms, absence of composition is known positively as simplicity. God is also beyond all mutability, the vicissitudes of time and all finitude and limitations. Positively expressed, God is eternal, infinite and all perfect. In other words, God is an undivided, self subsistent and perfect act. To this line of discussion we shall return a little later.

Via Affirmationis = The Way of Affirmation

Not only do we say that God is incorporeal (without a body) immutable (without change) and infinite (without finitude) but we also positively predicate of him goodness, nobility, beauty, truth and other positive attributes. Is it legitimate to affirm positively

that God is good or true? All our ideas including those of goodness etc., are derived from experience. Hence can they be predicated of God? In predicating positively certain names or ideas of God, are we not either applying them to God as we apply them to creatures, or completely emptying them of all content derived from experience?

When we say that God is good, we not merely mean that (a) God is not non-good; (b) God is the cause of goodness; but we also mean that God is positively good, that he is goodness itself. Though God is the cause of bodies we do not say that he is corporeal. So the two statements: God is the cause of life and God is living, are not identical. The second affirmation makes a positive statement about the very essence of God. In such statements like God is good, wise, true and living, there is a degree of positive affirmation concerning the divine substance which other predications do not possess.

To Thomas' mind it is quite clear that none of the positive attributes we predicate of God can represent or mirror God perfectly All the ideas we possess including those enshrining positive perfections are derived from the things of this world. Since creation mirrors the first cause only im perfectly and inadequately, the ideas derived from creation are only imperfect and pale representations of the infinite reality. The positive attributes or perfections by definition implies no defect, no limitation. So these perfections are positively in God. But as regards the manner of predicating these, such predicates or positive perfections involve a defect. The manner in which our mind conceives them is limited. Already Pseudo-Dionysius had observed that such predicates are at once affirmed and denied of God: affirmed "propter nominis rationem", and denied "propter significandi modum". When we say that God is good, we really affirm of God the perfection of goodness; but we by no means say that God is good in the way goodness is experienced by us. His goodness transcends our experience. He is supereminently good. He does not possess goodness as a quality inhering in himself. He is goodness itself. The goodness we experience in creatures are always mixed with defects. So to affirm God is good means more than God is not evil and God is the cause of good... We affirm above all that the goodness experienced in creatures pre-exist in God

in the highest, super-eminent degree. God is good not merely because he causes goodness but also because he is goodness itself owing to which he is the cause of goodness.

Analogy

These considerations introduce us into one of the most important teachings of Thomas, *Analogy*. We discuss analogy only from the angle of predication. In order to understand the nature of analogical predication, we need to have at first some clear notions concerning univocal and equivocal predications. Thomas writes: "A term may be predicated of various subjects in three ways; univocally, equivocally and analogically. Univocally, if the same term and meaning is used in exactly the same sense, as when animal is predicated of a man and donkey, for to both, definition of animal applies, namely the sensitive animate nature" (Opus II. de Principiis Naturae ad fratrem Silvestrum). When we state: X is man, Y is man and Z is man, the predicate man is applied to these three men in the same manner. It may be that one is more humane than the others. But humanity has however, a uniform and precise sense. This sense is applicable in the same manner to all men. In fact all universal concepts are univocally predicated. From this it is clear that no attribute or predicate derived from our experience of creatures can be univocally predicated of God.

"A term is predicated equivocally, if the term is the same, but the meaning and definition different, as when dog is used of an animal and a star". The word that is used in the predications is equivocal. An equivocal word unites two completely different ideas or things. A concept or idea cannot be equivocal. The names we apply to God and to creatures cannot be equivocal, i.e., their meaning cannot be totally different when applied to God and to creatures. If between God and creatures there obtains only pure equivocity, then from creatures there would be no way to God. Since creatures are the effects of God and since he is the first cause of their existence, and finality, they do mirror though imperfectly, the perfections of God.

"It should be concluded that these terms (of pure perfection) are used according to analogy. This method in common use lies midway between pure equivocation and simple univocation"

(S. Th. Ia. XIII. 5). In Greek 'analogon' means the proportion of likeness that exists between two or more things. Thus analogy of knowledge means the grasping of one existent according to its relationship to another. Analogy thus is a knowledge through comparison. For example, the existence, goodness or truth of one reality is manifested or at least clarified by comparison with another reality. Hence Analogy presupposes that the reality with which something is compared (at least the aspect under which the comparison is made) is more known than the later, and that there is both similarity and difference between them. Without similarity there is absolutely no possibility of comparison; without difference the comparison presents merely a repetition of the same thing with no information. In univocation there is only similarity. Humanity that is predicated of man is the same in all. In equivocation there is only difference. Though the same word is applied to different realities, the meanings are quite different. Analogy is rooted in similarity and difference.

In the last anlysis, analogous knowledge is rooted in the analogy of existence or being which implies that two or more realities are at once similar and different in their existence. This may be called metaphysical analogy in as much as similarity and difference are inseparably contained in the same predicate. What is said of existence is equally valid of all transcendental perfections. Though we can predicate animality of both rational and non-rational animals, and hence similarity and difference exist unseparated in that predicate, still they (similarity - difference) do not go down to the metaphysical structure of such a predicate. In point of fact animality is a univocal concept.

Thomas distinguishes between two basic types of analogy: Analogy of attribution and analogy of proper proportionality. In any analogical knowledge or predication, there is first of all the analogical name (content and concept) such as being, truth etc.,) and there are two analogates, that is, the carriers of the analogous name, or in other words, the realities of which the name is predicated. Example: God and creatures, in both of which being is realised. In the analogy of attribution, the anologous name is assigned to one analogate in dependence on another analogate.

By the first analogate we mean that reality in which the analogous content is principally and primarily verified. In the second analogate, it is only secondarily verified. Analogy of attribution essentially implies a dependence of the secondary analogate on the first.

Any type of analogy may be extrinsic or intrinsic. In extrinsic analogy the analogous content is intrinsically verified only in the primary analogate. Of the other, the analogous concept is predicated because of some extrinsic relationship. Health for example, is primarily, and intrinsically predicated of the body. But the colour of the face, medicine etc. are termed healthy just because of their relationship to the health of the body. Being on the other hand is predicated of God and creatures; of God primarily for he is being in its fullness and he is the cause of being; of creatures secondarily because they receive their being from God. But they too really possess being. Yet between God and creatures there is not merely an intrinsic agreement in existence, but this agreement is coloured by an essential difference.

Analogy of proper proportionality is based on the affirmation that each of the analogates possesses a relation in which all at the same time agree and disagree. In fact this is an analogous relation of two relationships. The word "proportionality" means this. By the word "proper" it is indicated that the relation in both analogates is ordered to the same reality present in both of them. Thus God is related to his existence but necessarily, infinitely etc. Creatures are related to their existence but contingently, finitely. As we see these two relationships, existence to God and existence to creatures, are both similar and dissimilar. The same reality of existence is present in both analogates but in different ways.

Though Thomas in his writings offers us the essentials of analogy, he does not go into details. Terminology has changed since his time. Quite many nuances have been introduced into his general teaching. For our purpose of discussing the nature of God, the general remarks we have made on analogy are quite sufficient.

If the way of negation means the removal from God of anything that belongs to contingent beings as such, then the way of intrinsic analogy is the way of affirmation. By the way of affirmation, we

predicate of God all pure perfections but in an eminent way. Philosophically, the final reason why we can predicate such perfections of him, lies in the fact that he is the cause of all things. The first cause must possess in an eminent degree all the pure perfections found in creatures. For Thomas the cause-effect relationship is the basis of analogy.

In our reflection on and expression of the mystery of God, analogy is the way to avoid both anthropomorphism and agnosticism. Since analogy essentially implies similarity between the two analogates (God and creature) it overcomes the danger of complete separation of God from creatures. We can have some knowledge of God. Agnosticism is not right. Analogy at the same time means dissimilarity or difference. Hence we cannot have any exhaustive knowledge of God. We cannot attribute to God our purely human qualities and feelings. We have also no right to pantheistically identify the world with God. "That the creature is in some way like God may be granted, but not at all that God is like any creature." "God and creatures are not comparable even like things of different kinds, for he is at once before and beyond all classification" (S. Th. Ia. IV. 3 ad 4 et ad 2).

Via Eminentiae = Way of Eminence

As remarked above when we affirm God is wise, true, good etc., we affirm of God, the essence of wisdom in a supereminent way. In the prime cause the pure perfections exist *secundum modum altiorem.* This is called the way of eminence. In fact *the way of eminence* is contained in the way of analogy and affirmation.

Let us conclude this section with two citations from Thomas. "Two shades of meaning should be distinguished in any name we attribute to God, the very perfection signified, goodness or life as the case may be and the mode of signification. As regards the former, perfections belong to God properly, and more properly than they do to the creatures, for they are his in the primary sense. But as regards the latter, no human term is attributable to God for it has a mode befitting the creatures" (S. Th. Ia. XIII. 3).

"The manner of super excellence according to which pure perfections are found in God cannot be signified by the names we impose

unless they are qualified by a negation, as when we speak of the infinite good, or by a relationship, as when we speak of the first cause or the supreme good" (Cont. Gent. I. 3).

Divine Attributes

"When God is called universally perfect because no kind of perfection is wanting in him, the statement can be supported on two accounts. First, everything brought to perfection pre-exists in the producing cause in a more excellent mode. Dionysius teaches this when he declares that God is not this or that but is all as the cause of all. Secondly, God is pure existence subsisting essentially and consequently, contains within himself the whole perfection of existence: all perfections are embraced in the perfection of existence and therefore, no single perfection is lacking in God. Dionysius also refers to this maintaining that God does not exist in any special manner, but holds before hand within himself all being, absolutely and boundlessly, and uniformly" (S. Th. Ia. IV. 2).

From the fact that God is the first cause, the necessary being and the highest reality, it follows that he is beyond all potentiality and that he is perfect. In scholastic language the perfections of God are termed divine attributes. The attributes are those perfections which formally and necessarily exist in God, since he is the cause of all. We do not consider those predicates which are only metaphorically predicated of God. In God all the perfections are found in the highest degree. At the same time, these attributes are not so many distinct and different determinations of God. They all form but one supreme reality of God. The perfections of God coalesce into unity in the infinite. But the human mind, finite and discursive as it is, is forced to look at the infinite richness of God piecemeal. We have to use different concepts to understand him a little. Moreover, we can know him only as he is reflected in many ways in the creatures. In the finite realities from which we derive our concepts of perfections, the perfections exist as distinct. But in God, they are not distinct from one another. Scholastics speak of a virtual distinction of the various perfections, that is, each attribute explicitly state what is implied in others. All the divine attributes designate one and the same absolutely unique reality, but understood by us under multiple and diverse aspects. "All divine perfections in

reality are identical. A comparison with the faculties of knowledge will make this clearer, a higher power by one and the same idea understands what a lower power must needs take in many pieces" (Comp. Th. III. 22). "Though they signify one identical thing, nevertheless the names attributed to God signify him according to many and various aspects and therefore not synonymous" (S. Th. Ia. XIII. 4.). But by predicating of God many attributes we do not falsify God, make him other than what he is in himself. Though we consider God under many aspects of perfection, we are quite aware that he is the simplest of all beings.

The Essence of God

Among the many divine attributes, we can think of an absolutely fundamental perfection, which according to our human way of thinking, may be considered the essential constituent of the divine essence. From this essential constituent-attribute we can deduce all the other attributes. We are here speaking only of a logical determination with the full consciousness that God is simple and all reality is his esssence. To our mind this perfection or "essence constituting-attribute" is logically prior to all other attributes. Through it we can most perfectly distinguish God from all other realities. But this way of thinking and speaking is not purely subjective. The beings which we experience manifest a certain hierarchy in their perfections. In us men, for example, activity depends on the will, will is directed by the intellect; will and intellect are the faculties of the spiritual soul. We connot reverse the order. We cannot say that intellect is directed by the will. The human being is revealed to us in this way.

"The essence of God is his existence" (Con. Ge nt. I. 22). "There is a being namely God, whose essence is his very act of being. That is why there are some philosophers who say that God does not have an essence, since his not something other than his act of being" (De Ente et Essentia V.). This is the constant teaching of Thomas. Why does he see in 'existence' God's 'essence'? "Being (esse), existence is the actuality of all things, even of forms themselves. Therefore, it is not compared to other things as the receiver is to the received but rather as the received is to the receiver" (S. Th. I.q 4. aI. d3). "Now all the perfections of all things pertain to the

perfection of actual being ; for things are perfect precisely so far as they have actual being in some way" (ibid. a2). To Thomas *esse*, the act of existence, in virtue of which an actually existing thing is, should always be considered as the most perfect "element" in a thing. All that is in a reality including its form, is in potency to existence. It is existence which makes all reality actually existing. It is the perfection of all perfections. God is *HE* who *IS*. He does not receive his existence, but is self-existent, his own existence, *ipsum esse*. His essence is to exist. In all other beings there is the distinction between essence and existence. God is *goodness*; but his goodness is identical with his essence. But goodness in our human experience, follows on and accompanies *esse*. Absolute being contains within itself eminently all other perfections (S. Th. Ia. 2a. 2.5. ad 2). Since God is *esse* he is by-itself-ness. He is absolutely independent, self-sufficient, self-existent. All other beings are not *a-se* but *ab-alio*. The *act of being*, the *esse*, that is affirmed of God is quite different from the abstract notion of being we form in our mind and apply to all beings. A general notion does not exist as such (ens commune). All that has actual being is particular. Since God is his own act of being, which is not the case with other beings, he is distinct from all else. "The divine esse, which is substance is not the universal notion of being, but *esse* distinct from all other existence. Hence by his very existence he differs from all other beings" (De Potentia 7. a 2).

Attributes: *Unity of God*

That the first cause, the prime mover is one and not many has already been implicitly proved by means of the proofs for the existence of God. The source of all thing is one. The common perfection of being which is possessed more or less by all beings calls for the existence of one Supreme Being from which all have received their being.

"Unity as convertible with being does not add anything to being but unity as the principle of number adds a reality in the category of quantity." (S. Th. Ia. XII. ad I) So as a principle of number, unity is not to be predicated of God; it only applies to things having existence in matter. (S. Th. Ia. XI 3 ad 2). So

when we say that God is one we are not speaking of him as one number in a genus or species. God is simple. For, clearly no individual can share with others its very singularity. Socrates can share what makes him man with many others, but what makes him this man can belong to one alone. So if Socrates were this man just by being a man, there could no more be many men than there can be many Socrates. Now in God this is the case, for as we showed God is himself his own nature. So to be God is to be this God. And it is thus impossible for there to be many Gods" (S. Th. Ia. II. 3).

If the divinity were more than one, then one God should be distinguished from another. By definition God is "Ipsum Esse". What then would be the distinguishing mark of Gods? Only when essence and existence conjointly constitute a being, or when the essence itself is further composed of matter and form, there is the possibility of multiplicity in genus and in species. God is beyond all such distinctions. In God there is no distinction between essence and existence. For any being, its *esse* is one. God is existence itself. So it is impossible that there be more than one God (Con. Gent. I. 41). In another passage, Thomas slightly changes the argument: "Now many Gods, if they existed, would have to differ. Something belonging to one would not belong to another. And if this were a lack the one God would not be altogether perfect..." (S. Th. Ia. II. 3).

Thomas also uses the infinitude of God to prove that, there cannot be more than one infinite being (S. Th. Ia. XI. 3). He argues that the universe constitutes one single order. Such a unity or singleness of order demands unity in the ordainer (ibid.). This argument depends on the validity of the proposition that there is ultimately only one order in the universe. As it is evident, the proof is intimately connected with the fifth way of demonstrating God's existence. We shall not discuss here this complex problem for it does not directly concern our topic.

Simplicity of God

The unity of God is not a unity of composition, that is, a unity arising from the union and oneness of many parts. From God all

physical (quantitative parts, matter-form composition) metaphysical (essence-existence composition) and logical (genus-species, universal principle and differences) compositions are excluded. In him there is no union of substance and accident. He is altogether simple and nowise composite (S. Th. Ia. III. 7). Ultimately the attribute of simplicity coincides with the pure existence of God. God is beyond all genus and species, for he is pure act, pure existence, excluding all composition. Simplicity is the mark of God, because in him essence and existence are identified without any limitation. Such a being is simplicity itself. (de Ente et Essentia 5). A composite being cannot be self-existent. Each is a determination, a mode of being. God who is self-existent is not composed.

Infinity of God

Infinity usually means: without limits. But this word is used in different senses. Matter is said to be 'infinite' in a privative sense. Such infinity is pure indefiniteness or indetermination and it is an imperfection. In a contrary sense when a perfection is without limits, it is said to be infinite. But this is *relative infinity*, that is limitlessness within a certain genus, or perfection. Finally there is absolute infinity implying no limitation at all. God is *Ipsum Esse*, and hence in him all perfections are limitlessly found. He alone is absolutely infinite. The pure act of being and the first cause of all has no internal or external limiting principle. "Matter is perfected and made definite by form. Infiniteness attributable to matter is imperfect and amorphous. On the other hand form as such is not perfected by matter but contracted rather, hence infiniteness attributable to form is perfection. Now of all realities existence is most form and since the divine existence is not a reality received in a subject, for God is his own subsisting existence, it is clear that he is infinite and perfect" (S.Th. Ia. VII. I).

Omnipresence

It is the attribute in virtue of which God is present in all things. Bodies occupy space by reason of their extension and exclude other bodies; pure spirits are however, present by reason of their influence on things. God is in all things, not indeed as part of their substance or as their quality, but in the manner that an efficient cause is

present to that on which it acts. God is everywhere and in every place, first because he is in all things giving them substance, power, and operation. Since place is real he is present there too. Also things are in place because they fill it, and God fills every place, but not as a body, for so one occupant excludes another whereas he displaces nothing" (S.Th.Ia. VIII 2). "Spiritual things are in place, not like bodies by the contact of dimensive quantity, but by the contact of power". (ibid. Ed I). Specially God is neither inside nor outside things. Since God is pure existence and the cause of existence, he is wholly intrinsic to the world (immanent) and yet different from it (transcendent) he is never fused with the substance of things.

Omnipresence presupposes the existence of creatures. But as far as God is concerned his omnipresence is nothing but his self-subsistence, infinitude and simplicity. Creatures are really related to God. His relation to them is not real because he transcends all relations.

Omnipotence

It is that attribute of God because of which he is capable of effecting anything which does not imply any inner contradiction. Omnipotence implies the power to create, i.e., God's total independence from pre-existing matter. What is self contradictory is nothing and hence cannot be produced.

Immutability:

Mutability is change. "He (God) is infinite and comprehends within himself the plenitude of all perfection of all being; he cannot acquire anything new or attain what has not already been achieved" (S. Th. Ia. IX. I). God alone is wholly immutable. Every other being is mutable at least in the sense that it is drawn out of nothingness by the divine will and could be allowed to fall back" (S. Th. Ia. IX. 2.). "Nothing waxes or wanes in God, for he is unchangeable and his being is entire all at once" (Comp. Theo. 8). God is pure act, with no admixture of potentiality. So change is impossible in him.

Eternity

Eternity is duration of something that excludes both a beginning and an end as well as all change or succession. As Boethius has

said: "It is the full and perfect possession of endless life always present in its entirety" (aeternitas est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio). Such a life belongs to God alone. "Because our knowledge is enclosed in the order of time, either directly or indirectly the time factor enters into our calculations and our knowledge reckons things as past, present or future. Past in memory, present in experience, future by anticipation in present causes... God however, is entirely above the order of time. He is at the peak of eternity, surmounting everything at once. Thence the stream of time can be seen in one simple glance" (Perihermenias Lect. 14). God's infinity and his self existence which excludes all change or the possibility of change from him entail the affirmation of his eternity. In Thomistic thought temporality does not enter into the essence of personality. In fact time implies change, materiality and the impossibility of simultaneous, total self-possession.

That God is beyond all materiality and that his existence is totally independent of matter and the conditioning of matter and hence perfectly *spiritual* is clearly taught by Thomas. The self-subsistent God has no potentiality in him. God is personal, a centre of existence with knowledge and will. In fact God is existence itself and his knowledge and love are identical with his essence. Such a being is supremely personal.

Divine Intelligence

That God is supremely intelligent, and all knowing can be understood from the fact that he is pure existence, pure actuality. From the proofs for the existence of God, we know that he is the cause of all and the ordainer of all things and their activity. An ordaining efficient cause is certainly an intelligent being. Since God is the unity of all pure perfections it is clear that he possesses knowledge too. Thomas brings us another line of argument: Knowledge is proportionate to the degree of immateriality or spirituality. A being is intelligent to the degree that its being is pure. God is pure spirit, pure being. Therefore, he possesses supreme and absolute knowledge. (S. Th. Ia. 14. I). Knowledge is an immanent act. Whatever is in God is his essence. Therefore his knowledge too is indentified with his essence. Since the divine intelligence is

subsistent, intellection means that God understands himself perfectly, that he is Thought thinking Itself (Arist. Meta. 1072 b. 13-30).

Since God is fully spiritual, he is fully intelligible and supreme intellection. So we can say that God knows himself perfectly (De Veritate 2. 2). St. Thomas' theory of knowledge as the intentional or spiritual possession of being of other things is analogically applied to God. The perfect equality and actuality of God means that the knower and the known are identical in God. The intelligible form is the divine mind itself, understanding itself, through itself (S. Th. Ia. I4. 2). The knowing mind and the object of knowledge and the concept and activity, all these are wholly identical (ibid. 4). He knows all things by knowing his own essence. This he does without forming a judgement (Cont. Gent. 1. 58). Since all things participate in the existence of God he in knowing himself, sees all in their deepest dimension. Thomas goes into such details as whether God knows possibles and even future contingent realities. Since God is beyond the succession of time, his knowledge is eternal. So God knows what we call future contingents as they are present to him in his reality. (S. Th. Ia. XIV. 13). In the Summa Theologica (Ia XIV 6) Thomas discusses all these problems with great care and insight. God knows without reasoning and discursiveness though he knows all reasoning and processes (Cont. Gent. I. 57). "Lest anyone should fancy that God stands utterly aloof and apart from everything, that on our part he is beyond our knowledge, while he for his part does not cherish what is below him, Dionysius adds that the divine knowledge is cricum-apprehensive because it does not acquire knowledge from things but as their cause forestalls them" (De Divinis Nominibus I lect. 3). In fact Thomas deals with the knowledge of God in great detail. We have not the time or space to discuss the matter at length here.

Will of God

From the fact that God knows, we may conclude that he wills also. The good as known constitutes the proper object of the will. Once any good is known it must also come to be desired. Thus a being who is endowed with knowledge must be endowed with a will. In Scholasticism, will is considered to be the intellectual appetite. To material things, there is a corresponding natural appetite, to

animals, a sensitive appetite; to intellectual being a rational appetite or will. Since God is the summit of spirituality, he possesses supremely and most properly the character of will (De Veritate XXIII. I). Just as God's knowing is his being, so is his willing (S. Th. Ia. XIX. I.). The object of the will is the good apprehended. The intellect of God apprehends directly its own essence. Consequently the divine essence is the primary object of God's will. "Of necessity he wills his own perfect and independent goodness" (S. Th. Ia. XIX 3 also 2). But every being endowed with will, tends to communicate its goodness to others. So God too tends to communicate his goodness to others. As we have seen, God is the cause of all. He knows all in his own essence. So also he wills and loves others in willing and loving himself.

God is the supreme Good and hence supreme freedom. He is free in relation to all contingent beings, for his essence as the absolute good is sufficient unto itself. God is free with regard to the means he uses to achieve his goal. We know that God is bound only by his science and knowledge which are nothing but his essence. The natural necessity of things and the freedom of free creatures do not limit his freedom, for all these realities flow from the free decision of God. The will of God is the cause of things. Since God is the first in the order of efficient causes, he acts by mind and will (S. Th. Ia. XIX. 4). God is therefore not merely the first cause but the supremely free cause; he is freedom itself, for he is determined only by his own reality and in no way by anything exterior to him.

Remarks

Such in short is the picture of God that emerges from the philosophical thought of Thomas. This conception of God remains the background of his theological thought on God based on revelation. I have sedulously avoided the temptation of mixing up Thomas' philosophy and theology. Thomas himself and all his great commentators were convinced that a man using the resources of his intelligence could arrive at some knowledge about the nature of God.

Thomas regarded the Biblical revelation of God as the starting point and goal of all religious understanding. His metaphysical

speculations by means of abstract terminology is no substitute for the concrete language of the Bible. All philosophical reflection is a "second order" persuit. It is meant to elucidate from the angle of reason our knowledge of God received from his own words. This is a truth which we must constantly keep in mind when we discuss the philosophy of Thomas.

In Thomas' reflection on the nature or essence and attributes of God, he remains faithful to his philosophy of being. God is 'Ipsum Esse'. It is from this fact, there flows all his other perfections. But the reflection on God's attributes is not without problems. For example, Thomas says that God knows the temporal things eternally. Thomas accepts the reality of time and succession. If time is real, how can it be known timelessly? How can God in knowing himself timelessly know all the possibilities actualized in the world? In fact the whole area of God's knowledge does contain questions demanding further reflection and clarification.

The all perfect God is certainly perfect morally too. If God were imperfect morally, then he would not be all perfect. Some think that some of the perfections are mutually exclusive. In philosophical and theological thinking there is a constant tension between the infinite justice of God and his equally infinite mercy. In the God-man and God-world relationship, the supreme freedom of God and the freedom of man, the foreknowledge of God and the free decision of finite spiritual beings, the goodness of God and the problem of evil have been considered almost insoluble problems.

For the theists the idea of an all perfect being is not inconsistent. Nor will they accept that the perfections of God can be in conflict with the legitimate rights and perfections of creatures. Our anthropomorphic way of thinking or our inability to distinguish between the absolute and relative orders of reality are at the root of our difficulties. Though we have no time to discuss these problems in any depth, it is good to remember that our human reflection on the nature of God has its limitations and problems, which we cannot easily dismiss.

(B)

Śrī Madhvācārya: Nature of Viṣṇu.

In the first part, we had limited ourselves strictly to Thomas' philosophical conception of God. What the human intelligence through its experience of and reflection on finite realities can find out about God formed the basis of our discussion. But with regard to Madhva such an approach is not possible. As we have remarked in the introduction and explicitly stated in the first chapter, Madhva's inquiry into the problem of God is *śruti*-centered. He was convinced that only *śruti* could give us any true knowledge of God. In order to get an inkling into the inner mystery of God, we must with reverence approach the sacred texts. But they can never be independent sources of knowledge as far as the Lord is concerned.

Madhva's exposition of the nature of God is primarily aimed against the Advaitins of his time. They taught that *Brahman*, though really not endowed with attributes, could be considered from an object point of view as endowed with qualities. In other words they made a distinction between *'nirguṇa'* and *'saguṇa' Brahmans.* Though Brahman is one, still because of the power of *māyā* such a distinction is possible. The problems which Madhva had to face were: Is *Brahman* really *nirguṇa*? Can we say that *Brahman* can be surrounded by and reflected in *māyā*?

Oneness of God

According to Madhva the whole of *śruti* (true scriptures - *sadāgama*) and *smṛti* teach only one Absolute Being. This being is Viṣṇu, identical with Brahman. Viṣṇu, taught by the sacred texts, is the abode of all good qualities. Nowhere in *śruti* do we find a distinction being made between an attributeless Brahman and a Brahman with qualities. "It is wrong to say that one and the same Brahman is said to be endowed with qualities of producing the world, of being seen and expressed when a soul is in the state of ignorance, though in a state of knowledge, Brahman is said to be attributeless, unseen and inexpressible" (*Tattvadīpikā* pp. 40-43).

Some Advaitins affirmed that the second *sūtra* of the *Brahmasūtras* (*janmādyasya yataḥ*) gave us only an accidental or relative definition of the Absolute. Its real description is that it is *sat, cit, ānanda.*

Against such a view Madhva affirms: "That from which the birth etc., of the world is the essential definition of Viṣṇu alone" (*Anuvyākhyāna* 97, 98). The first *sūtra* enjoins on us the duty to inquire into Brahman (Viṣṇu). The second *sūtra* defines the Supreme Being as the cause of the origin, support and destruction of the world. This definition implicitly affirms that Viṣṇu alone and not another being is the cause of the world. Madhva has no difficulty in declaring that the Lord is the cause of the world.

The omniscient, luminous Viṣṇu can in no way be veiled by *māyā* is self evident to Madhva. Light and darkness cannot exist together.

The body of Viṣṇu

The Śaivites taught that Śiva or Rudra, the Supreme Being was bodiless. The Vaiṣṇava sacred texts teach that Viṣṇu has an intellect, a mind, members and sub-members. (B. S. Bh. II. ii. 41). That Viṣṇu has a body, pleasant odour, lustre of knowledge etc., form part of the ancient Vaiṣṇava teaching.

To support this scriptural teaching Madhva uses a philosophical argument. Speaking of the bodiless Śiva he says "Since Śiva is bodiless he cannot have any causal relation to the world" (B. S. Bh. II. ii. 38). According to Madhva only an embodied being can enter into causal relationship. He compares a bodiless being to a corpse. Experience tells us that only embodied beings like potter, weaver etc., act as causes. The reason is that only such beings can place themselves on a supporting ground which is necessary for any action.

What Madhva intends to teach is that if Viṣṇu is the cause of the world, then he must have a body. As we have remarked in the first chapter, that Viṣṇu is the cause of the world, we know from the true scriptures. So also the sacred texts tell us that he has a body. But these teachings of scripture are in line with our experience. It is to the credit of Madhva that he removes from Viṣṇu material bodies. The Lord is completely different from matter (B. S. Bh. III. ii. 15). He pervades over matter and is the inner

principle of matter's activity. Since the word body usually means a body that comes from the union of man and woman, it is better to say that Viṣṇu has no body (Jayatīrtha on B. S. Bh. III. ii. 14&15). But still since the scriptures speak of the body of Viṣṇu, we cannot easily do away with the word. What we have to keep in mind is the *otherness* (from matter) of the Lord's body. Unlike us, Viṣṇu is not subject to birth and death, change and decay.

Positively, the body of Viṣṇu consists in nothing but his attributes. "Nārāyaṇa, whose body is nothing but the totality of his attributes...." (*Anuvyākhyāna* I. I.) Viṣṇu's head, arms, and trunk are made out of being, knowledge and bliss (B. S. Bh. II. ii. 4). Madhva does not accept the teaching that the spiritual souls and matter form the body of Viṣṇu. Only the infinite attributes of the Lord form his body. These attributes and the members of Viṣṇu are not distinct from one another or from Viṣṇu.

The view that the infinite spiritual selves and matter form the body of Viṣṇu is not acceptable to Madhva. It is true that both souls and matter depend on the Lord. He is the indwelling principle of these realities; yet they do not form his real body.

Viṣṇu, the Ocean of Attributes

In all his writings, one of the loved words of Madhva is *pūrṇa*. Viṣṇu is the fullness, the ocean of all good qualities and he is devoid of any defects. Nikhilapūrṇaguṇadehaṁ, nirdoṣaṁ, nirdoṣāśeṣasadguṇaṁ, gunārṇavaṁ, guṇasarvasvamūrtimān etc., are oft recurring phrases in Madhva. In his view every word of *śruti* even every *varṇa* of the sacred texts primarily means Viṣṇu and his qualities (*Sarvanāmatā* of Viṣṇu).

There are certain statements in *śruti* in which Brahman is termed *kevala*, simple and *nirguṇa* (without attributes). The Dvaitins tell us that such words do not intend to teach the qualitylessness of the Absolute. *Kevala* says that Viṣṇu is unmixed with matter (*kevalo vimiśraḥ*). The so called *nirguṇa śruti* texts proclaim that Viṣṇu is devoid of all material qualities like *sattva* and *rajas*.

Apart from these arguments from *śruti*, Madhva has a few philosophical reflections on this matter. According to him, every

object is individual, particular and endowed with attributes. Every true apprehension is an apprehension of an object endowed with qualities. The object as it exists and the apprehension of the object do manifest a correspondence to each other. In fact, if realities were attributeless, amorphous, then all human conduct and inter-relationship would stop. Such being the general structure of our experience and of the realities experienced, it is quite clear that the infinite Viṣṇu should be endowed with infinite qualities. It is also clear that an attributeless absolute cannot be the purport of *śruti*.

One of the essential traits of Viṣṇu is his independence (*Svātantrya*). From the Lord's power and independence we can argue to his defectlessness and attributes. From experience we know that we are not full of qualities and without defects, because we are not powerful enough to get what we want and avoid what we dislike. But in the case of Viṣṇu we do not find any extrinsic dependence or limitation of power. Hence he must be defectless and full of qualities. So *Dvaita-Vedānta* declares: "It is impossible to enumerate or speak of qualities of the Lord for they are innumerable; All the qualities declared or undeclared in *śruti* are found in him" (B. S. Bh. II. i. 38).

Viṣṇu is Sat

In his *Anuvyākhyāna*, Madhva commenting on *Brahma Sūtra* I.i.15 says: Viṣṇu alone is designated by the *Mantravarṇa* as *satyam. jñānam, anantam.* Viṣṇu is called *sat* because he causes existence (*Sadbhāva*). Most probably what Madhva means is that Viṣṇu causes the appearance of, or manifestation of realities. But when Jayatīrtha writes that Viṣṇu is called *sat*, because they (realities) are dependent on him, he seems to mean more than the appearance of things. Perhaps he tries to get behind the origination-dissolution cycle and establish an ontological dependence of things on Viṣṇu. In the *Anuvyākhyāna*, Madhva writes that *sat* can stand for the principle of life and of destruction. When we say that Devadatta is, we mean to say that he is alive. Viṣṇu is not merely alive but also causes life. In fact Madhva analyses functionally the term *sat*, when it is applied to Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is existing, he is alive, he causes other things to appear; on him all things are dependent for their existence; he causes both life and destruction.

Vijñāna of Viṣṇu

That Viṣṇu is omniscient is a clear teaching of *śruti* (*sarvajña* is an epithet of the Lord). From the fact that he is the cause of the world, we know that he is conscious and omniscient. His form is that of unmixed knowledge (*nājñānamiśrajñānaḥ*) (B. S. Bh. II.ii.41, III.ii.16 etc.). In the *Prāmāṇalakṣaṇa*, Viṣṇu's knowledge is marked off as eternal, embracing the totality of beings, and totally independent. All other beings know in dependence on Viṣṇu. Perfect clarity distinctness and immediacy in their highest degree mark off Viṣṇu's knowledge. The knowledge of Viṣṇu is creative of the world. The world is called *māyāmaya*, because it is produced by the knowledge of the Lord (*Prajñāvinirmitaṁ yasmāt ato māyāmayaṁ jagat, Viṣṇutattva Vinirṇaya* no. 263). But sometimes we get the impression that the Dvaitins do not affirm the real creative power of knowledge, but only the arranging and ordering function of the Lord's infallible knowledge.

Viṣṇu has no memory, but only actual knowledge. Memory is only a substitute for actual immediate cognition (Īś. U. Bh.17. See also the perceptive commentary of Jayatīrtha on this passage).

There are many problems connected with Viṣṇu's knowledge such as the eternity of the Lord, the temporal character of things, the immediacy of his cognition, the free decisions of spiritual beings and their knowledge by the Lord and so on which have not been raised by Madhva in his writings. Given the background of his thinking, these were not the problems he had to face in his times.

Ānanda of Viṣṇu

Viṣṇu is rightly called endless (*ananta*) because he is the fullness of bliss, because he is the plenitude of joy" (A.V. 197. B.S.Bh. I. iii. 9, *Tattvadipikā* p. 116, etc.). The infinitute of Viṣṇu is the limitlessness of his bliss. The Lord's greatness, perfection, supremacy and infinitude are expressed by such terms as "pūrṇatva", "niḥsīmatva" and "māhātmya".

Viṣṇu alone is called *ānandamaya*, not because he is a modification of bliss, nor because he presides over bliss, but because he is the abundance of bliss. (*Anuvyākhyāna* 179 & B.S. Bh. I. i. 13). The suffix '*maya*' goes to express the nature of reality. So when we

say that the Lord is *ānandamaya* it means that he is of the nature of bliss. It is the characteristic of Viṣṇu alone to be bliss. All other beings from *Śrī* to the least blade of grass enjoy only a drop of bliss (B. S Bh. I. ii. 15). The overflowing bliss of Viṣṇu is at the root of his activity *ad extra.*

Aiśvarya of Viṣṇu

In the Pāñcarātras, *aiśvarya* (lordship) is that quality because of which the Lord can produce the world independently of all other causes. In Madhva *aiśvarya,* besides this meaning, has a new significance. It is the Lordship of the Lord which harmonises in him these qualities, which to us appear as opposed to each other (B.S. Bh. I. i. 15). In the *śruti* texts we read: Viṣṇu is at once a unity (a whole) and members, he is far and near; he is minute and great. Because of his *aiśvarya,* these attributes though opposed to each other in our experience, are not mutually exclusive in the Lord. In the Kaṭha Up. Bh. p. 15, Madhva says that *aiśvarya* of the Lord enables him to be active and yet unchangeable. The Advaitin does not understand the Lordship of the Absolute Being and hence he makes him an inactive being in order to save his unchangeability. Once again this attribute is the reason why the Lord can make use of different means or instruments in his work of producing the world. (Jayatīrtha's commentary of Bh. G. Bh. II. 23-25). Viṣṇu's lordship is connected with his omnipotence. He is known as *sarvaśaktimān, acintyaśaktimān* and *vicitraśaktimān.* His power is all embracing, varied and unthinkable. Along with these attributes we must mention also the *bala* of the Lord, which makes it possible for him to produce the world without fatigue.

In fact by insisting on the Lordship and power of Viṣṇu, Madhva brings to our notice the fact that the Lord is above our logic. What we think of as mutually exclusive, or opposing, and what appears to us as impossible is possible and in fact harmoniously existing in Viṣṇu. We cannot apply our categories to him purely and simply.

Viṣṇu is Nitya

That Viṣṇu is beginningless and endless needs no explanation. In the Kaṭha. Up. Bh., Madhva says: That the world is eternal

like an ever flowing stream, (*pravāhanityа*) whereas Viṣṇu is said to be deathless (*amṛtaḥ* p. 19). Viṣṇu alone is primarily deathless. Again Madhva distinguishes between primary and secondary eternity, though he does not really explain the meaning of these distinctions. In B. S. Bh. II. iii. 1-7, Viṣṇu is said to be beyond the *nityatva* of other beings. By these various statements, what is taught is the beginningless, endless and unchangeable persistence in existence of Viṣṇu.

Viṣṇu is *Omnipresent* by one and the same form, just as the same sun is present in many objects. (B. S. Bh. II. iii. 22, 23). This is possible because of the lordship of the Lord. He is the indwelling principle of all beings, the principal agent of all activities and the ruler of all. He is present even in the deepest hell, though he by no means suffers the pain of hell (B. S. Bh. III. i. 17). He is present in all beings and all beings are in him (Īś. U. Bh. 1&5).

Viṣṇu is Svatantra

In the thought of Madhva, Viṣṇu is the abode of all auspicious attributes. But the most divine of all perfections and the perfection that sets him apart from all other beings, is the independence or freedom of Viṣṇu. In his *Tattvasaṅkhyāna,* Madhva divides realities into two irreducible groups; independent and dependent beings. Viṣṇu alone is the independent being. All other realities are dependent on the Lord. *Svātantrya* or independence means the non-dependence of a being on another as regards its essential nature, knowledge and activity. An independent being is not dependent on another as regards its existence (*sattā*) activity and knowledge. (Jayatīrtha's *Tattvasaṅkhyānaṭīkā* & *Viṣṇutattvavinirṇayaṭīkā*). In other words, Viṣṇu is self-sufficient as regards his existence, knowledge and activity. This means that Viṣṇu never originates: he does not pass from an unmanifest state to a manifest form. He is always real, actual and self-manifest. The actualising force and the motives of Viṣṇu's actions and the source from which knowledge springs must be sought in him alone.

Freedom means, says Jayatīrtha, the following of one's own will. But *icchā* or will follows knowledge (see B. N. K. Sarma, *The Philosophy of Madhva* p. 38). Madhva is certainly conscious that only a spiritual being is free.

The independence of Viṣṇu is the root of his defectlessness and of his perfections. A dependent being is not capable of acquiring all that it desires or of avoiding all that it dislikes. Since no other being is equal or superior to Viṣṇu, no harm can come to him. He is present even in hell. Yet he suffers no pain, for he is *svatantra*. In an opposite way because of his *sarvasvātantrya*, he is *sar aguṇa-pūrṇa*. Madhva very often uses the example of a king, who is totally free in his kingdom and who possesses all the riches of the kingdom in order to explain the independence and perfections of Viṣṇu.

The independence of Viṣṇu focuses our attention on Viṣṇu's self-sufficiency, absolute and essential sovereignty, omnipotent will, total control over all realities, his eternally realised desires and perfect separation from and transcendence to all realities. Because of the total independence of the Lord he is the cause of the world and the principal cause of the activity of all finite beings (Bh. G. Bh. II. 24. IV. 12 etc.) (We shall take up the relationship between Viṣṇu and the origin of the world in the next chapter). The absolute sovereignty of the Lord extends over the liberated and the lost souls; The supremly free Lord is the giver of final freedom to souls, for no conditioned or unfree being can grant freedom to anyone.

Perfections: Similarity and Difference

Madhva is ever anxious to point out the difference between Viṣṇu, and other beings and their perfections. By means of numerical and quantitative expressions he tries to stress the absoluteness of the Lord's perfections. The *Upaniṣads* tell us: the knowledge of the soul is one thing, the knowledge of Brahman a different thing. All beings live by a drop of the bliss of Brahman. So from *śruti* we know that the perfections of the Lord are far superior (*parā*) and different from the perfections of other beings. Viṣṇu's attributes form the support, the sustaining and regulating source of the attributes of all creatures (*Tattvadīpikā* p. 339). The limitless attributes of Viṣṇu are invisible, but the perfections of other beings are perceptible.

According to the Dvaitins it is legitimate that we designate Viṣṇu's and finite beings' perfections by the same names. This is because between them there exists the relation of what is reflected

and the reflected reality. Though the Lord's perfections are far superior to ours and in a way different from ours, still the use of the same word assists our understanding of the world. The idea behind this statement is that we come to know the perfections of God and reality in general through the aid of Vedic words and only secondarily through the other sources of cognition.

Inner Simplicity of Viṣṇu and the Multiplicity of Perfections

By the fact that Viṣṇu is the ocean of all qualities, does he become a heap of qualities or an infinite substance with innumerable accidental attributes?

Madhva most vehemently rejects any real, inner distinction between Viṣṇu and his attributes. Any one who so conceives the Lord is threatened with eternal punishment. Not even *bheda-abheda* can be accepted in this area. It is therefore quite clear that Madhva, inspite of his insistence on the many attributes of Viṣṇu is not ready to impair the unity and simplicity of the Lord. The *Viṣṇu Tattva Vinirṇaya* approvingly quotes a passage from the *Paramopaniṣad* which says that the actions, attributes etc., of Viṣṇu are his own essential nature and nothing else. (No. 459). There is no distinction among them, between them and the essential nature of the Lord. Just as the substantiality of the substance without introducing any real separation or division in the substance, so are the attributes in the substance. The attributes do not introduce any real separation or division in the substance, still by virtue of them, there is the possibility of the language of difference (VTV. 457). Thus each attribute is an expression of the Lord's essential nature. It is essentially one with it. There is also a oneness and harmony of all the attributes. Yet there is also some distinction because the language of difference is possible.

In fact in Dvaita the substance-attribute relation as explained above is applicable to all the entities in the universe. What is specific to the Lord is that though he is endowed with numberless perfections, still he is said to be without any inner difference or distinction.

The Advaitin tries to reach divine simplicity and unity by means of a *via negativa,* which relegates all multiplicity and specification

to the sphere of illusion. To Madhva's mind such a procedure is at once an error and a sacrilege, for it reduces the all perfect to the level of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) Madhva is at pains to tell us that Viṣṇu is one and simple, yet his simplicity and unity find their dynamic expression in diversity. The supreme freedom of the Lord does not do away with perfections but demand innumerable attributes. But his infinite perfections form but one harmonious unity. Each attribute of Viṣṇu is related to him by the relation of *Saviśeṣa-abheda* and each has for essence all the others and each of them possesses the divine infinitude.

Conclusion

We have briefly exposed Thomas' more philosophical conception of God and Madhva's more religious and theological concept of Viṣṇu. In Madhva philosophy, theology and mythology are intertwined. In Thomas we can really speak of a conception of God drawn out from man's rational reflection.

The unity of God forms part of their conception. Madhva would from the angle of his faith give the name Viṣṇu to this infinite being. Thomas' theological vision of God as distinguished from the vision exposed above is more rich and inspiring. Both the thinkers accept that this one God is infinite, eternal, omnipotent, ever free and the first cause of all. Both of them accept the transcendence and immanence of the Supreme Lord. The Lord is incomprehensible.

The way the attributes of the Lord are explained does differ. In Thomas we find the philosophy of being running through every statement of his. Madhva on the other hand philosophically remains as remarked above an essentialist. If in Madhva independence is the essence of God, in Thomas it is being, the *Ipsum Esse* of God.

Both Thomas and Madhva in their respective understanding of the reatity of God insist on the transcendence, personality and immanent presence of the Lord in all and the attribution of all pure predicates to him. God is essentially different from all that is not God. The finite spirits and matter are eternally distinct from God, says Madhva. Moreover God alone is independent and all other

beings are dependent. For Thomas the distinction between God and all that is not God is most clearly seen from the angle of being. Both the thinkers will accept that God does not need the world. He is all perfect, self-sufficient. God's communication of his goodness or *ānanda* to others and the union of spiritual beings to him are acts of freedom, and graciousness. Of course this idea of God's freedom in the work of cretation is more clearly asserted by Thomas than by Madhva.

Mystics of all time have spoken of some sort of identity between souls and God. Both Thomas and Madhva were mystics. But both these thinkers though aware of the most intimate nature of the union between God and souls, emphasize the fact that no infinite being can be identical with the Supreme Lord.

Being human, we are forced to use spatial and temporal terms to express the mystery of God. Thomas is quite conscious of the sign and symbolic value of such language. In Madhva there are mythological assertions, which do not quite fit into philosophical language. Unless we are ready to constantly negate all images and concepts of God, we will make of our image of God an idol. Yet at the same time, if our language is not concrete and poetic we will make God an abstract and static reality.

In Thomas, God is not simply the highest reality, a being, though the most perfect among beings. God is different in kind from all other beings. He is not a link, though the strongest in a chain of beings. He is outside the chain of all contingent beings. But in Madhva, there are statements which seem to indicate that for him God is the highest of all reals, the peak in a pyramid of beings. But in other statements he seems to be convinced that God escapes of all our finite logic and that about him only paradoxical assertions are fitting. Both Thomas and Madhva accept that the incomprehensible God, because of creation and because he is revealed in the Scriptures, can be known. Thomas makes a clear distinction between these two ways of knowing. In his philosophical thinking he does not positively introduce revelation. Analogy forms one of the cardinal points of Thomas' philosophy of God. He speaks of analogy of being and analogy of faith. In Madhva there is certainly an implicit doctrine of analogy, though he has not fully

analysed all its elements and implications. Again in his writings analogy of faith and analogy of being are not distinguished. But the point to be noted here is that positive language referring to God can be justified only if we accept analogy. There is similarity and dissimilarity between God and other realities.

Not only God's transcendence, but his immanence in creation is an essential point in the thought of Thomas and Madhva. Though God is present in all beings, yet he is essentially and substantially distinct and different from all. Madhva often explains this matter using Paurāṇic, mythological terms, whereas Thomas uses the language of being, presence, power and cause. Of course it is in the theology of Thomas the conception of man's divinisation comes to the fore.

The most profound contribution of Thomas to the philosophy of God is to be sought in his being-centred thought. Saying this, perhaps we have said all. Though Christian thinkers before Thomas offer us basically the same picture of God, yet their thought moved on the level of substances and essences. Existence itself was thought of as an essence. Thomas offers us a philosophy of existence which is all embracing and refreshing. Again his reflections on analogy developed with care and consistency and rooted in his philosophy of being form a remarkable contribution to the philosophy of God. Thomas' being-centred thought is at pains to give to each being its metaphysical due.

Madhva too deviates on some important points from the accepted Vaiṣṇava, Vedāntic traditions. The absolute immutability of God, the emphasis that souls and matter do not form the body of the Lord, that the body of the Lord is nothing but his transcendent perfections, the stress placed on the *svātantrya* of the Lord and the way in which he makes the independence of the Lord the root of all his perfections and the factor that distinguishes the Absolute from all that is relative, are quite specific to Madhva's thought.

The contemporary man however, with his overriding concern for men calls into question this whole conception of God. What is the relevance of a being, who is so transcendent, so immutable, so omnipotent, that man is nothing before him. Though both Madhva

and Thomas speak of the immanence of God, still it is thought of in such an abstract manner. God is never touched by the suffering and pain of creation. It is true that in Thomas' theology there emerges the Christian God who suffers, dies and yet lives in the hearts and in the midst of men. But a philosophy of God which does not begin with man's concrete problems, his pain, alienation, impoverishment, weakness, fallibility and bitter falls and death and which inserts these, together with the other data of experience such as the strength and nobility of man into a total picture of the Lord of the universe is not an open or complete thought. A feudal king, who is so powerful and free that he can crush all his opponents is not the leader we seek today. Into Madhva's picture of God such strokes of thought as the existence of souls unworthy of liberation, the production of false texts to mislead the unworthy souls and the tension between the law of *karma* and the independence of the Lord enter. These and other points should make us think of the time conditioned nature of all thought. This is the reason why all thoughtful and questioning men and women of today are searching for newer and more relevant images of God.

III

GOD AND THE WORLD

(A)

Thomas: The Problem

In order to reach the existence of God, Thomas started with and from the realities surrounding him. From the experience of and the reflection on these realities, he establishes that the condition of the possibility of their existence and activity is the actual existence of a prime-mover, of a first cause and a necessary being. Starting from the actual existence of contingent beings, Thomas reaches the actual existence of the nccessary being. This first cause, this necessary being, this ordainer of all, we call God.

Once again using the concepts derived from our ordinary experience and utilising the knowledge that the first cause has produced everything and hence every creature has a likeness to its cause, Thomas reflects on the nature of God. Though by no means a finite mind can exhaustively know God still we can know a little of what

God is. Between the world and God there is similarity and dissimilarity. So our knowledge of God remains strictly analogical.

God is the cause of all. But we have not yet asked the question how and why God produced the world. If God is infinite, *Ipsum Esse*, the necessary and totally other being, then why should he produce the world? How can Being and beings exist? "There are three phases in the going out of creatures from God. We ask first what is their cause? Second, how they came about? Third, what is the principle of their staying?" (S. Th. Ia. X. IV prologue). We know already that God is the first cause of everything. But how the creatures come to exist, is a problem which demands our attention.

Emanation - Evolution

By the time of Thomas some systems of thought had explained the existence of the universe, by a process of emanation. Others believed that the world necessarily proceeded from the Absolute. As a matter of fact Platonism, Neo-Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism and the Gnostic systems explained in more or less pantheistic and deterministic terms the procession of beings from the ONE.

Emanation in philosophy means the efflux of all things from the divine substance and by derivation that which has flowed forth. The process of emanation is held to be necessary and the emanations progressively lose their perfection as they proceed farther from the divine source. In this sense the world of beings flow forth from the substance of God.

Evolution in philosophy and theology primarily implies the alteration of something which at the same time perdures. When one says that world evolves from the reality of the Supreme Being, he means that just as the acorn evolves and becomes an oak, though it perdures somehow in the tree, so God evolves into this universe, though he still remains below the multiplicity of change.

In these tendencies of thought, the world of beings is a development of God, his own ontological self-expression and manifestation. Pantheism is the common term to designate these tendencies. The different shades of pantheism may be expressed in various ways. The world is a divine emanation; the many, form the divine evolute, or

divine modalities. When the absolute and the world are identified we have monism.

Whether one holds the view that God alone is real, the world being but manifestation or evolution of the divine, or that the world alone is real, God being the sum total of all that exists, ultimately these views deny the personality, the infinitude, the immutability, the simplicity and the pure existence of God and the reality of the world. "Some have thought that God is the world-soul, while others that he is the formal principle of all things... Others most foolishly taught that he is primary matter. All make the same mistake of thinking that in some way God can enter into composition with other things. He is the first efficient cause and an efficient cause is not numerically identical with its effect. He is the essential efficient cause, immediately and directly active. This cannot be said of any part of a composite, when the whole thing is the active cause. God is the first thing absolutely speaking, and no part of a whole can be that." (S. Th. Ia. III. 8). Divinity cannot be pith of all things. Thomas writes: "Multiplicity can proceed from unity in three ways. Firstly, divison as when a whole is broken up into many parts; such a multiplication takes away the integrity and completeness of the whole" We may add that pure existence cannot be divided. "Secondly, by common predication, as when many species issue from a genus and many individuals from a species; what are here multiplied are not subsisting things, but general natures." For Thomas, God is outside all genus and species. God is not a general nature, but a personal being, individuated by his very existence. "Thirdly by effusion as when many rivers rise from one source, and water from a spring spills into many streams." This last he (Thomas) considers a good metaphor to explain the procession of creatures from God, though God, the cause is not lessened. "He remains undivided, in its essence unspent and simple" (De Divinis Nominibus II. 6).

Creation

If the world of finite beings did not come from God through any manner or way that would do away with the true nature of God and the reality of the world, then how did it originate? Thomas' unambiguous reply is: By creation. What is creation? "We must examine the emanation (procession of things from a source; the

word emanation is not used here in the philosophical sense mentioned above) not merely of particular things from particular causes, but also of the whole of being from the universal, designated by the name creation" (S. Th. Ia. XIV. I).

In studying the emanation of things in their entirety from the universal principle of being, matter though not produced as a thing must not be left out of account. (S. Th. Ia. XIV. 2 ad I).

God is the first cause of the world, the real ground of all experienced existence. God the incomprehensible being is ontologically the silent horizon of all our encounter with being. God is always implicitly, conjointly affirmed in every affirmation as different from the knowing subject and the known object. He is implicitly affirmed as distinct from all that becomes the object of our knowledge, including ourselves. The ground and principle of all comprehension lies beyond the field of comprehension. We can never objectify God. All objects of knowledge and their activity are affirmed implicitly as dependent of God. This implicitly affirmed dependence of things on the Absolute is termed creation.

Creation is the free act of God which produces a reality out of nothing. Not only is the thing as such not pre-existing, but also the material out of which the thing is made, is not pre-existing. When we say that God creates the finite beings, we imply that God does not produce them out of pre-existent material. If such material was to pre-exist, then either it would be independent of God, in which case God's absoluteness would be lost, or it itself would be created by God.

Again, God himself cannot be the material of creation, for he is simple, spiritual and immutable. God alone is the necessary being, and beside him there cannot be another independent reality. God is absolutely prior; he cannot change; he cannot exteriorize himself or limit himself into creation. That would contradict his own nature. So the only way for the creatures to exist is a free act of God by which he wills them into existence out of nothing. Nothing or nihil is not to be thought of as a sort of chaos out of which God makes something. *Ex nihilo* means *non ex aliquo* (not out of something). Out of nothing does not also mean that prior to creation there was

total absence of being. God existed. He is the efficient cause of all. What is denied is the pre-existence of the material cause. Creation is not a process, a movement or a change. "Creation implies a thing's existence in fact, not that it has been achieved as a result of proceeding process. No approach to being is involved, nor any transmutation. What is stated is just initial reality coupled with a reference to the creator. In this sense creation is original freshness related to God" (De Potentia III. 3).

"As an efficient cause is, so does it act; and therefore a natural cause does not produce being absolutely, but being in a subject and being as realized according to this or that kind. Consequently a natural cause acts by transmutation, requires material on which to work, and is unable to produce something from nothing...But God is otherwise, he is totally actual, both in himself, for he is pure act unmixed with potentiality and with reference to actual beings, for he is their origin. The whole of subsisting being is produced by his action, to this action nothing is pre-supposed. He is the principle of being entire according to his entire simplicity for which reason he can produce something out of nothing" (De Potentia III. 1).

Christian theology and philosophy before Thomas had called God the creator of the world. But Thomas consistent with his philosophy of being considers creation an act of *Ipsum Esse*, conferring the 'totality' of their existence to others. Other beings cause being only in the sense that a such or such being is produced: the hot to be, the house to be - but *being* simply can be caused by the infinite being alone. (De Potentia III. 7).

Thomas views creation from two angles: "In its *active sense* creation signifies divine action invested with a certain logical relationship and as such is uncreated itself. In its *passive sense* it signifies a real relation, which is a created entity; though to speak more precisely, a creature is a substance and this real relationship is not a thing, but a reality inhering in a thing and therefore noncreated rather than created" (De Potentia III. 3 ad 2). Creation considered from the angle of God is God's activity identical with his divine substance. God being simple and pure existence there can be no real distinction between the divine substance and his activity. By this activity, God is not really related to the creature. If God were to be really related

to creatures, then his simplicity and independence would be lost. Again God cannot be in his substance related to the world. In such a case God's act of creating the world would become necessary and he himself would not be able to exist without creatures. God and creatures would form a totality, thus impairing his personality.

But creation viewed from the side of creatures means a real relationship of the fresh being to God. It is an ontological relationship. It is real (relatio realis) whereas the relation of God to creatures is one of reason alone, that is a relation attributed to God by our way of thinking. To be created is to be not itself; to be non-self-sufficient. It is radical or root dependence on God. Creation as an act is a unique causality, for it affects not only the manner of being or the particular mode of being, but being itself.

Creation, a Free Act of God

We have already pointed out that God is the fullness of knowledge. He is knowledge itself with no shadow of ignorance. He is also the supreme good. We have mentioned in the previous talk that God is intelligence and will. What God necessarily wills is only himself the adequate good of his will. Every other good is finite and hence willed by him only as ordered to himself. (His own goodness is self-sufficient). (S. Th. Ia. XIX. 2). "Of necessity he wills his own perfect and independent goodness. He can gain no perfection from other things. Hence he does not will them by absolute necessity, but by practical necessity that is, what he wills, he cannot unwill" (S.Th. Ia.XIX. 3). To the all perfect being, creation is a most selfless act. God is not an artisan, who needs to produce the world either for his personal needs, or for self-expression or for any other reason. God is not moved by anything other than himself in his act of creating.

Motive of Creation

On the one side God's creative act is free in so far as it is neither externally constrained nor internally needed for the fulfilment of his own life. God's intention is solely the communication of his perfection, which is his goodness (S. Th. Ia. XI. 4). Sometimes it is said that God created things for his own glory. This does not mean that God needed some glory which he lacked, and hence to be gained

by creation. Nor does God want to have a chorus of admirers to stand by his side. The statement clearly emphasises the fact that the only reason for God's activity is himself. The motive of creation is his own goodness as communicable. God the first cause, communicates his goodness, love, beauty etc., to others though in varied degrees. Creatures participate in God's being. To create is above all an act of goodness and love. It is not the goodness of creatures that induces God to create them. It is his act of goodness which makes the creatures to be, to be good and lovable. In Thomistic thought the diffusion of God's goodness, the glory of God and the final destiny of all created beings coincide. They are all one.

The scholastic principle, goodness is diffusive of itself is not to be understood in a deterministic sense. The supreme goodness is supremely free too. Hence its diffusion is the freest of all actions.

God Alone can Create

Thomas insists on the point that God alone can create. (De Potentia. III. 4). God cannot communicate this power to others. Thinkers like Avicenna, in order to bridge the gulf between the simplicity of God and the multiplicity of creatures, had introduced intermediary causes of creation. They believed that creation was a necessary act of God. Thomas refutes first of all, the view that creation is a necessary action of God. Secondly. he affirms that between the simple reality of God and his action which brings multiplicity into existence, there is no real distinction. Thirdly, there is no reason why God's simple but omnipotent act of the will cannot produce the manifold. Peter Lombard thought that God could make use of certain instruments (pure spiritual beings) in his work of creation. "A secondary instrumental cause does not share in the action of a principal cause, except by working dispositively through its own proper power to the effect intended. Otherwise it would be futile to adopt it. Now the proper effect of creative activity is presupposed to all others, and no instrument can predispose its production. Creation works without raw material requiring to be prepared by an instrumental cause" (S. Th. Ia. XIV. 5). No finite being can aid in creation because, it is the total production of finite beings.

To Thomas it is clear that creation is a mysterious, incomprehensible activity. It has no finite parallel that falls within our experience. From the angle of the motive of creation, its incomprehensibility becomes still more apparent. Only the self-sufficient being can be totally free. Only the person who is wholly determined by his own nature, his own reality can be fully altruistic. Creation means the total, radical dependence of the created reality on God. Yet the creature precisely because of creation possesses a relative independence, autonomy, consistency in being and activity.

Creatio ab Aeterno

Using human reason, man could show that God created the universe out of nothing. Any other manner of producing the world would imply either the impairment of God's transcendent nature or the just reality of the universe. But Thomas held a peculiar view which states that reason cannot conclusively establish that creation took place in time, that is, that there is a first assignable moment of time. In fact Thomas, against Albert the great and his friend Bonaventure, held the view that creation from eternity was not self-contradictory. On the other hand the Averroists believed that philosophy could prove that creation could only be eternal, from eternity. Against these thinkers, Thomas affirmed that reason could show the non-contradiction of creation in time. Hence for Thomas reason can on its own, neither disprove *creatio ab aeterno*, nor creation in time. Of course, on the data of Scripture as he understood them, Thomas believed in the doctrine of creation in time.

For Thomas creation precisely states a principle of origin, but not necessarily a principle of duration (De Potentia III, 14 ad 8). No cause instantaneously producing effects necessarily antidates them in duration. God is a cause able to produce effects suddenly and not through a process of change...When a thing is supposed to exist, at that very moment the beginning of its action can also be supposed. God is existing from all eternity. So his action too can exist from all eternity. Again in an instantaneous action the beginning and the end are simultaneous, indeed identical. At the very instant an efficient cause is conceived of as producing its instantaneous effect. the term of its action is also posited. In other words God from all eternity is capable of producing an activity by which he could

instantaneously posit beings outside of him. So creation "ab aeterno" is not an impossibility. So Thomas thinks it possible for God to create a world totally dependent on him, yet endowed with a duration without beginning. A duration without beginning is infinite *ex parte ante* that is, when we consider it from now backwards. It is not infinite *ex parte post* as it terminates in the present. Of course the infinitude of creatures in duration is not the infinitude and eternity of God, which is nothing but the simplicity, total and simultaneous possession of *Ipsum Esse*.

At the same time Thomas argues that God could will to create by an eternal act, a world in time. He freely wills that the world be after its non-existence. God's act of creation is always eternal, for it is identical with his essence. When Thomas speaks of creation "ab aeterno" he has a whole conception of planatory beings which is not ours. But without entering into any discussion on this matter, we might say that Thomas' arguments on the matter under consideration are by no means satisfactory. But the matter itself is not important for us at present.

Creation, Omnipotence, Freedom

The act of creation is certainly an act of omnipotence. Omnipotence means that God can accomplish everything that does not imply an inner contradiction. What is or can have being is the object of divine omnipotence. "It is better to say that what involves contradiction cannot be done rather than that God cannot do it" (S. Th. Ia. XXV. 3, 4). The problem of God's omnipotence is sometimes posited in more abstract terms. Is God subject to the principle of contradiction? According to Thomas, the question itself is wrongly put. Every principle, the very structure of being is ultimately founded on God. God acts according to his nature. He is not subject to any principle that comes from outside. He acts in conformity with his own being.

Thomas is convinced that God could have created another world if he so willed. Any created order of things is not commensurate with God's goodness. He knows the infinite possibilities of his essence and so he is not determined to any of the finite orders. (S. Th. Ia. XIX; Con. Gent. II, 26-27). Absolutely speaking, it is possible for God to produce a world better than the one existing.

This hypothetical problem is meant to highlight the total freedom of God in his act of creation. At the same time Thomas believes that the existing world is relatively good.

But if better and better worlds are possible, then why did God create this particular world? To this question, there is no real philosophical answer possible. We can speak of the relative goodness of this world and the best use we are called upon to make of it. Finally God's freedom alone can explain why this world and not another is now existing.

Conservation and Concurrence

Thomas not only teaches the creatures total dependence on God for its continued existence and activity. It is true that the created things possess a relative independence or derived autonomy and is endowed with its own principles of existence, operation and intelligibility. Yet ultimately all finite beings depend on God for their persistence in existence. This exercise of causality with regard to all creatures as regards their continuance in existence is called conservation. "Augustine says that when man is building a house, the edifice remains after he has ceased his work and gone away, whereas the world would not stand for a single instant if God withdraws his support. Here is rejected the position of those who argues as though a thing did not need an active cause except while it was in process of being made" (Con. Gent. III. 65). According to Thomas things have been brought into existence out of nothing. So they could go back there, did God permit. (De Potentia V. 4. ad 10). To be able *to be* denotes the *active power* of the creator, not a positive potentiality in a subject" (S. Th. Ia. XXV. u ad 2). In fact, conservation is not but the continued creation of the being. It is not an indirect preservation of the world by guarding it against the force of dissolution. The creature's dependence in existence on God is so radical, so existential that the beginning and permanance in existence of every creature depend on him. Ultimately the reason why God alone can be the cause of the consersation of the universe is because he alone is existence. He alone can be the cause of "existence simply".

Concurrence

Concurrence of God is the influence he exercises upon the activities of creatures. God not only creates and conserves beings

but also cooperates with them in their actions. Thomas writes: "God causes the action of everything inasmuch as he gives to everything its power to act and conserve it in being and applies it to its action and inasmuch as it is through his power that every other power acts. If we add to this the fact that God is his own power and that he is present in all things not as an essential part of them but as maintaining them in their being, we should conclude that he acts in every agent immediately, but without eliminating the action of the will and of nature" (De Potentia III. 7). On the point of divine concurrence and human freedom much discussion has taken place. Without entering into these controverted points I want to point out that for Thomas every effect has a newness as regards being. Now the one who ultimately produces being is God. But God's concurrence does not do away with the activity of creatures, nor with their relative autonomy. The causality of God and of creatures do not belong to the same order. God is the primary cause and the creatures are secondary causes. In one *action* in the production of one effect, God and creature cooperate, but at different levels of action. So there is no tension or opposition between them. According to Thomas there is the general concurrence of God given to every created agent in every one of its activities and it is immediate.

Providence of God

We might in general describe providence which pertains to God's intelligence and will as the act whereby he causes, cares for and directs all beings including free, spiritual beings, to their particular ends in attaining which each contributes to the final purpose of the universe, the manifestation of God's goodness and glory. Thomas connects providence with prudence whose task is the ordering of things toward their end. About what Thomas writes regarding the ordering of things, we have discussed earlier. The regularity of the universe, the way things work out, the manner in which beings tend to their goal cannot be explained except in terms of an overall directing providence of the author of all things. (S. Th. Ia. 103. I). Thomas argues to the existence of providence from the angle of God's intelligence, will, benevolence and supreme causality and from the analogy of things we find around us. God's providence exists in his

intelligence and presupposes his will. It is one simple, undivided act, identified with his essence (S. Th. Ia. XXI. I). God is not determined by anything except himself, though his providence extends to all creatures. (S. Th. Ia. XXII. I). All things are eternally in him. He immediately cares for all. But this plan of providence is executed in time (S. Th. Ia. XXII. I). This is known as the government of things by God. In the governance of the universe God makes use of instruments, which is a sign of his goodness and generosity (S. Th. Ia. XXII. 3). The universe is diverse. Material and spiritual beings, free and determined beings abound in the world. This diversity is the work of God's providence. Each being is directed by God according to its proper nature (S. Th. Ia. XXII. 4 etc.).

Evil

But if the omnipotent and all wise God has such care for beings, how can evil, physical and moral be accounted for? How can men be really free as regards choice, if God has already a plan, which he infallibly achieves? God, who could always create a better world could have created it without evil.

Thomas' answer is unambiguous. God did not will the evils contained in the world. He freely wills creation as a communication of his goodness. He cannot will or love what is opposed to goodness. This does not solve the problem. To use human language, did not God foresee the evils in this world? Yet he willed the world. Then he wills evil too!

Thomas following Augustine says that if evil were a positive entity, then the objection would be valid. But evil is a *privation*, not an *aliquid* which God can create. There is no positive principle of evil from which evils as entities can proceed. Evil exists in beings as the privation of a good which should be there. Blindness is the privation of eyesight, not in a stone, but only in a being that ordinarily should be seeing. Not even man can will evil. The will wills only good.

Evil is not willed in itself. Evil is to be willed as an apparent good. Moral evil implies a defiance of God. But what man wills is his own total independence. So we cannot say that God willed the

evils of the world. What he wills is the reality of the world, the good of the world. Certainly he foresees the evil in this world. He permits them. Thomas here uses a comparison. When a person is in charge of many things, he permits certain defects here or there, in view of the total good. God seems to act in the same way. (S. Th. Ia. XIX 8; XXII. 2 ad I).

When Thomas says that evil is a privation, he does not mean that evil is an illusion. What he means is that evil does not come under any of the ten categories of being. It is really not an 'entitas'. But yet evil exists as a privation in the good, not in its own right as a being. But existing in beings as privation, it is real enough to be spoken of in positive terms. Evil does not cause anything. But the being in which privation exists can be a cause and through its action beings which really lack necessary perfections can arise (S. Th. Ia. 48. I-3).

In willing this world, God permits the physical evils of creation. Physical pain, corruption and other evils are of the physical order. Thomas is even ready to accept that physical evil which is inevitable in a varied and graded universe, is *per accidens* caused by God. What God wants is the good of the whole universe. But the whole burden of moral evil, Thomas following the Christian tradition, places on the free will of finite spiritual beings. The moral order is the order of human freedom. God has given freedom to man and to finite spiritual beings. Freedom is a good which makes man more like God and capable of freely glorifying him. Yet freedom also implies the possibility of sinning, of going against God. Man can choose an apparent good against the real good because of his present state. So for the sake of the greater good of freedom, of free service and praise of God, he permits the misuse of freedom.

Of course, these philosophical considerations on the mystery of evil is not a real solution to the problem. Thomas in fact in his reflections on evil in the world, draws his data more from Scripture and faith than from philosophy. Philosophically Thomas is satisfied with the statements: God did not in any way will moral evil. He permitted it for the sake of a greater good, the freedom of man. God did not will physical evil for its own sake. For the perfection of the universe he wills it *per accidens*. Certainly not all physical

evils are bound up with the perfection of the universe. Many are the results of moral evil. These evils God *permits* and hence he does not even will them.

Remarks

Once again we have limited ourselves to Thomas' philosophical reflections on the origin and support of the universe. The very idea of creation, which Thomas philosophically defends, is rooted in Christian revelation. This is something accepted by all his commentators. What is remarkable in all his reflections is the all embracing nature of his philosophy of being. Creation, conservation, God's cooperation in the activity of all creatures, providence and evil are viewed from the angle of existence. Certainly some of his reflections on such topics as *creatio ab aeterno, evil* and its privative nature, the one sided relationship of creation, contain many problems even when viewed from the premises of Thomism. But we need not discuss them here. But any contemporary discussion of these points need to take these difficulties into consideration.

According to Thomas, God is not only the efficient cause of the universe, but also its final cause, that is, the cause to which all the creatures tend and the exemplary cause of all beings. The ideas in the mind of God, which are nothing but his essence (we are using human language here) form the models of all creatures. Creatures are nothing but finite limitations of the infinite possibilities of God's essence. God cannot however, be the material and formal cause of creatures. If he were to be the substance out of which creatures are made, or the form of finite beings, then his simplicity and spirituality would be destroyed and pantheism would be the result.

(B)

Śrī Madhvācārya

Viṣṇu is the cause of the Origin, Support and Destruction of the World

Following the Vaiṣṇava-Vedānta tradition, Madhva affirms that Viṣṇu alone is the cause of the production, support and dissolution of the universe. This is known from the teaching of *śruti*. Bādarāyaṇa's assertion, that from which the origination etc., of the universe, clearly points to Brahman as the cause of this world. The

Lord is the one from whom proceed the origination, support, dissolution, government, knowledge, ignorance, bondage and release. Madhva quotes many passages from the sacred texts to prove this point.

Refutation of opposing Views

During the time of Madhva there were schools of thought which affirmed that Viṣṇu was not the cause of the origin of the universe. The atheistic *Sāṅkhya* thought that *prakṛti* alone and the mere presence of *puruṣa* could explain the existence of the world. The Materialists explained the existence of the universe by the varied combinations of the atoms. For the Buddhists, *śūnyavādins*, the universe results from void or *śūnya*. The *Vijñānavādins* assert that the world is the modification of *vijñāna*. The *Śaivites* think that *Śiva* is the cause of the world. The *Śāktas* think that the world originated from *Śakti*. In his *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, Madhva exposes the views of these and some other schools and refutes them.

A non-conscious being, devoid of *cit* cannot be the author of the world, for such a being is incapable of purposeful activity. According to Madhva the world is an ordered and purposeful 'thing'. So the producer of the world must be endowed with knowledge. So *prakṛti*, the atoms of the various elements cannot by themselves be the cause of the world.

Īśvara's causal influence on the world is not to be considered deistically. It touches the very nature of *prakṛti* itself. The activity of God is lasting. This is affirmed by Madhva against the *Seśvarasāṁkhyas* who accept a sort of initial favour of the Lord after which *prakṛti* alone remains the cause of everything.

The universe is deeper and higher than what our senses make us know. It is a place of *dharma* and *adharma*. The destiny of the *jīvas* gives the ultimate finality to the world. The *sarvanāmatā* of Viṣṇu teaches us that the world is at once a mirror manifesting God to the wise and a veil hiding him from the ignorant.

The author of the universe is not only endowed with knowledge. He is also omnipotent and independent. No finite being, including souls can be the cause of the world.

For Madhva, Śiva is not the author of the universe. According to *śruti*, Viṣṇu alone is the supreme being and he is the cause of all things. Moreover, Śiva being an unembodied being cannot cause the world. So Viṣṇu alone should be considered the cause of the world.

Viṣṇu is only the Efficient Cause of the World

In all the Vedānta schools, Brahman, the Absolute Being is designated as cause of the origination of this universe, because the *Brahmasutras* explicitly teach us so. In the Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita schools as also in the school of *Bheda-abheda*, *Brahman* is both the *nimitta* and *upādāna kāraṇa* of the world. The very causal terminology used in all these traditions, *sṛṣṭi*, *sarga*, *janma* and so on, have emanationistic overtones. In the Pāñcarātras, the attribute of *śakti* enables Viṣṇu to become the *upādānakāraṇa* of the universe. Madhva himself uses the traditional terminology and hence we may get the impression that he too taught the *upādānakāraṇatvam* of the Lord. Moreover he approvingly quotes a number of creation myths, which are openly emanationistic.

Madhva openly and explictly rejects the view that Viṣṇu can be the *upādānakāraṇa* of the universe. According to him change is possible only where there is (inner) division. Experience testifies to the fact that changeable entities are 'divided' entities. Now Viṣṇu is unchangeable because he is undivided (he has no parts). (B. S. Bh. II. iii. 7). Change is a type of dependence. Viṣṇu is totally independent. Hence he is unchangeable. But the unchangeable Lord effects the changeable realities. He is the power in all beings endowed with power, yet he himself is without parts (B.S. Bh. II. iii. 9).

From the arguments it is clear that Viṣṇu cannot be the material supportive cause of the world, for such a cause necessarily is subject to change. It is clear to Madhva that the material world could not have come from the Lord, because a non-conscious being (material being) can never be the evolute of a conscious being. For him the gulf between spirit and matter is so great that it is impossible for a spirit to evolve into a material being.

Some thinkers have held the view that only a part of the Supreme Being was the *upādāna kāraṇa* of the world. Madhva

outright rejects any division or parts in Viṣṇu. For him matter and not the Lord is the *upādāna kāraṇa* of creatures. In the *Nyāya Sudhā* Jayatīrtha sums up the whole position thus: There are two completely different beings (*Vastuni*). Now, one is the unchanging efficient cause (*nimitta*) of the world. The other is the changeable material (*pariṇāmi*) cause of the world. (Text quoted by B. N. K. Sarma, Op. Cit. p. 172). Thus Dvaita-Vedānta rejects the *Brahma-pariṇāma-vāda.*

According to Advaita the *upādānakāraṇatvam* of Brahman consists in this, that Brahman illusorily appears as this world (*vivarta-vāda*). Brahman is the real substrate of the universe. But the universe itself is only an illusory appearance imposed on Brahman. Brahman does not really act or change.

For Madhva the world is real. It is not an illusory reality. Brahman really produces this real world. According to him only impotent beings, incapable of producing real effects have recourse to magic and illusory activity. Viṣṇu, the supremely real and independent being needs no magic or yogic power. Thus he rejects *Brahmavivartavāda* 100.

Origination of the World

In Madhva's thought, souls, matter, time, space and certain other realities are eternal, coeval with Viṣṇu. But all these realities are eternally dependent on Viṣṇu. "Substance, *karma*, time, the essential nature of being and *jiva*, all exist by his favour (Viṣṇu's), in its absence they do not exist." These lines from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* are often quoted by Madhva. Madhva never says that the Lord causes all the beings to exist. The real origin of the universe means *sṛṣṭi* of everything as a result of the evolution of *prakṛti*, and of the union of souls with bodies. All these happen because of Viṣṇu. God does not produce realities out of nothing. Existing realities acquire a new state of being, a change in dependence on the will of another. (*parādhinaviśeṣāpti*). Inasmuch as eternal realities are eternally dependent on Viṣṇu and since this dependence is also a dependence regarding their *sattā*, we might say that this teaching has great similarity to Thomas' idea of *creatio ab aeterno*. For Thomas creation is causation. For Madhva dependence is not thought of as causation. Moreover, the meaning of the word *sattā* is not quite

clear in Dvaita tradition. The divine causality is exercised most clearly in the *sṛṣṭi* of the universe. Perhaps *sattā* is conceived more as a quality than as the form of all forms or as radical existence. The world as we experience it, originates under the will of *Īśvara*. Perhaps we can go a step further and interpret Madhva's teaching on dependence in a more metaphysical sense.

In our daily experience we see causes acting upon certain materials and producing some effects. A weaver for example, produces a piece of cloth. But his action does not reach down to the smell, taste etc., of the cloth. Much less does his action effect the *dharma*, the quality aspect of smell and taste. The qualities of the cloth are concomitantly produced in the production of the cloth. Viṣṇu's causality is quite different from the action of ordinary causes. For example, Viṣṇu produces not merely water, but also the qualities of water and the very essence of these qualities. Viṣṇu's greatness is to be sought not so much in the fact that he produces substances, but in the fact that he produces, controls and hence enjoys every quality of every substance. (Bh. G. Bh. VII. 1 and Jayatīrtha's comments).

Viṣṇu is the Supporter and Ruler of the World

Viṣṇu is the source of the origin, support, government, destruction (of the universe) and of ignorance, bondage and liberation (of souls) is a sort of formula which Madhva often uses in his writings. Commenting on the *Viṣṇutattvavinirṇaya*, Jayatīrtha says: "Concerning souls, origination signifies the production of the body, *sthiti* means the permanence of the soul in the bodily state, *niyati* (government) stands for the binding of the soul by means of injunctions and prohibitions. As regards the immortal gods, their origin consists in their appearance, their *sthiti* in the absense of death, their *niyati* in their subordination to the commands of Viṣṇu" (VTV. Ṭīkā 342-3). The support of the world seems to mean then the permanance of the world in its manifest state. Viṣṇu exercises the supporting causality (*dhārakatvam*) in order to keep all manifest realities in that state. The imperishable Lord supports all beings by being present in them in many ways. When the Lord not wishing to support the world, puts it down, it disappears. In spite of such graphic language, Madhva knows that it is the command of

the Lord that supports all things. It is the independent and omnipotent will of the Lord which is the source and support of all.

Viṣṇu is present in all beings not merely in a general manner. He is present in the heart and at the root of the hearing faculty; he is present in the eye and all the senses. Those persons endowed with real knowledge know that all actions are from Viṣṇu. Not only is Viṣṇu present and active in each being and faculty, but at his command each being, and even each faculty has a presiding deity. These deities too are instruments in the hands of the Lord for the support and government of the universe.

Following the general Vedāntic tradition, Madhva says that Brahman is the cause of the destruction of the manifest universe.

Purpose of Creation

Viṣṇu is absolute bliss. His desires are eternally fulfilled. So from his work of producing the world he cannot derive any profit or utility. Yet no intelligent being does anything without a purpose. So it is legitimate to ask what the motive of Viṣṇu was in creating the world. According to Madhva *Īśvara* engages in the work of creating the world out of play (*līlā*) and not for the sake of gaining even a particle of profit (B. S. Bh. II. i. 33, 34). The *līlā* of Viṣṇu is rooted in his bliss. Hence Madhva could say that the world originated from the bliss of Viṣṇu. The divine play is nothing but an overlfow of divine bliss. But it should not be thought that God is in need of play or that he derives some pleasure from such a play. The free Lord acts because of his blissful nature and his creative act is nothing more than an act of his will (AV. II. i. 108). In fact Madhva is telling us that God alone is the reason for creation. No extrinric motive determines him to produce the world. What the Lord intends for the beings is the liberation of the good and damnation of the wicked.

Creation and the use of Sādhanas

We know from the sacred texts that the Lord used various means like *prakṛti*, space and time in his work of creation. We also know that God creates men in accordance with their *karma*. These means and *karma* seem to bind the freedom of God.

It is true that Viṣṇu makes use of these means or instruments in his work of creation. But their power to be means or instruments come from God (B. S. Bh. ii. 39). The very determination that such or such realities would be used as means of creation come from the will of Hari, the Lord. (*svecchāniyama*, AV. II. 92). The freedom of Viṣṇu is such that he could have created the world with or without these instruments (ibid. 94). God uses for example, *prakṛti* as the material cause of the world, just as a man though capable of walking on foot with no aid, uses a stick to lean on out of sport. (Bh. G. Bh. IX. 8). By the fact that God uses many instruments and means in his creative work, he manifests his glory and majesty.

Karma does not bind the Lord. The very existence of *karma* depends on the Supreme Being. It is true that God takes the *karma* of the *jivas* into consideration while creating the world. But the Dvaitins place *karma* under the sovereign will of the Lord. (*Nyāya Sudhā* II. i. 37).

In Madhva's reflection on the actual origin of the world, on the motive of creation, God's use of instruments in the work producing the world etc., he uses the *svātantrya* of the Lord as a key to the solution of these problems.

It is impossible to enter into the complicated cosmogonies proposed by Madhva in his writings. I shall make a couple of general remarks on this matter. The many cosmogonic myths that are scattered in *śruti* texts are taken up by Madhva in his commentaries and interpreted according to his faith in Viṣṇu. In this sense there is a "vaiṣṇavisation" of all cosmogonies in the system of Madhva. Given the firm conviction that Viṣṇu alone is the Lord and God, this process was unavoidable.

In Madhva's writings we find traces of the Pāñcarātra cosmogonies. But he removes every trace of *iśvaraparināma* from the ideas he takes over from these writings. But the principal theory to explain the process of world origination and evolution comes from the *Sāṅkhya* system. Once again Madhva changes the *Sāṅkhya* ideas radically. *Prakṛti* is only the material cause of the universe. The ultimate cause of everything is Viṣṇu. It is at his command *prakṛti* evolves into its various stages and matter and spirit come together.

Problem of Evil

From the side of God the purpose of the production of this world is his *ānanda-līlā*. But from the side of the finite spirits creation is meant for the liberation of the good and the damnation of the wicked. Madhva accepts the existence of evil — suffering and pain and sin — in this world. The immediate explanation for the existence of evil is to be sought in *karma*. But since *karma* itself is totally dependent on the Lord and since in every being the Lord is present and active, we should look for a deeper reason for the existence of evil. At first we have the impression that the Dvaita belief in the *svarūpabheda* of finite spirits seems to explain evil. According to this theory some souls by nature are good and others wicked, incapable of reaching *mukti*. Since actions proceed from the nature of beings it is clear that evil and wickedness flow from the wicked spirits. But the question arises: Are not the *mukti-ayogya* souls too eternally dependent on Viṣṇu? Their *sattā* itself is dependent on the Lord. So can we say that ultimately the *svarūpa* of beings explain the evil in this world? Moreover, it is a basic belief of Madhvism that God is the principal agent in all beings. Induced by Viṣṇu all beings act. It is explicitly accepted by Madhva that at the command of the Lord, Śiva and others composed the *durāgamas* in order to keep the wicked souls in ignorance. If this be the case, is not God himself the cause of evil? No religious man can easily accept such a position. God is not partial, he is goodness itself. So when faced with the problem of evil Madhva can only shift from *karma* to *svarūpabheda* and then back to *karma*. Yet at the same time he will have to hold on to the total dependence of all things on God and to God's causality in all the activities of finite beings. Such being the case Madhva seems to be silently accepting the fact that the problem of evil cannot be satisfactorily solved at the level of our thinking.

Conclusion

We have given here only the basic points of Thomas' and Madhva's explanations of the procession of finite beings from God. For a comparative study of the thought of these thinkers, these ideas would suffice. Once again the existence - centred thought of Thomas and the essence - centred thought of Madhva stand out. The general ideas proposed by Thomas on the problem of creation form the

common patrimony of Christian tradition. But his way of infusing newness into them through the application of his philosophy of existence remains his great contribution to the history of thought. Madhva's thinking when compared with the traditions existing in his time is original indeed. His firm assertion that Viṣṇu is only the *nimitta kāraṇa* of the universe, that all finite beings are dependent on the Lord that *pāratantrya* is the deepest relation of the finite to the infinite are specific contributions of thought. Though Madhva says that the *sattā* of all finite beings depend on Viṣṇu, still, the meaning of the term *sattā* is not unambigously clear. Does *sattā* mean only *parādhīnaviśeṣāpti* or the attainment from God of radical existence purely and simply? If the second way of interpreting the texts of Madhva and his commentators is a possibility, then it joins with Thomas' assertion that creation is nothing but a relation (of dependence) implying freshness of being. In fact here we have an area which historians of comparative philosophy could take up for study. The co-related ideas of dependence-independence are found in other Indian thinkers like Śrī Kaṇṭha. These basic ideas of medieval thinkers could be studied in relation to medieval European thought.

In the course of these talks we pointed out a number of similarities between Thomas' and Madhva's ways of looking at God. But it is good to remember that we have been comparing the philosophical picture of God offered by Thomas with the philosophical and religious picture of the Absolute presented by Madhva. We completely left out Thomas' theological vision of God. Given our method of procedure, this was inevitable.

The greatest similarities and dissimiliarities between thinkers and systems of thought are to be sought not in the palpable domains of ideas, concepts and images, but in the ways of thinking in thought-forms and in unexpressed world views. In comparing two thought-forms, one is not necessarily to be considered superior to another, though a person might prefer one way of thinking to another. In fact deep down, thought-forms are complementary. So in pointing out the different thought-forms of Madhva and Thomas I am only stating a fact and not making a value-judgement.

Taking the thought of Thomas and Madhva, if we consider the order of beings, God is the centre. Both are theocentric thinkers. Thomas with his being centred thought thinks of God as Being. In and with and through everything it is the Being of God that is manifested. God is not like any of the particular being. His particularity consists in his Being. God, the centre of Dvaita thought is the greatest Being, the most perfect Being, the only free Being. In the hierarchy of substantial realities, God is the first.

From the point of view of the understanding of being, Thomas' primary point of departure is knowing subject, the person. In other words, his understanding of being is more anthropocentric. Madhva's point of departure is primarily the *jñeya* as *jñeya*, the objects of knowledge. It is clear that Madhva speaks of experience, of the experiencing subject and of *śruti*. But in all these statements the way of thinking moves on an object centred groove. Though the dominant trend of Thomas' thought-form is anthropocentric, still there are times when he too manifests certain traits of object centred ways of thinking. Precisely because of this difference in their thought-forms, their conceptions of God manifest also radical differences.

In the course of these talks we mentioned some of the concerns and preoccupations of contemporary man, and his questioning attitude to traditional theism in all its aspects. At the same time, he is conscious that idealism, existentialism, logical positivism and some trends in analytic philosophy embrace agnosticism, atheism and purely intramundane immanentism. They avoid or even evade the problem of the absolute. Many thoughtful men are not happy with these trends of thought too. Though many thinkers today facilely speak of the impossibility of any meaningful language except with regard to verifiable things, still all men are, most of the time, concerned with and speaking of values, love, truth, goodness, meaningfulness of things, progress, humanity, and other intangible realities. Today we know that verifiability is of different grades or rather of different types.

Militant atheists, by their very denial of God, bring the problem of the absolute to the forefront of thought. One may reject God, but in that rejection he seems to voice ultimate concerns. This simply shows that the question of God is involved in human existence. Man's

fragility and strength, his meanness and nobility, and the ambivalence of history and the hope that is embedded in all striving, inevitably bring up the problem of the absolute.

The starting point of philosophy is the total experience of man and of the whole of mankind. So a philosophy of God must take the totality of experience into consideration, including religious and mystical experiences. I am in a way pleading for the mixing up of religious beliefs and philosophy. But I am convinced that a genuine philosopher must take religious experience too as a datum for his reflection and study. At the same time, he can neither neglect the past conceptions of God, nor the bitter attacks directed against all theistic thought.

According to all theistic thinkers and to all religious men, God is a mystery, a *parama-rahasya*. He is inexpressible, impossible to conceptualize and to objectivize. He cannot be considered an object. He is the supreme subject. He is transcendent.

So the proofs for the existence of God are not mathematical demonstrations. All proofs, whether they be the metaphysical proofs of Thomas, or proofs drawn from the moral consciousness of man, or from mystical experience or from action, or from the absolute horizon implicit in every act of knowing and willing are subject to criticism and objections. Hegel spoke of a feeling or repugnance to the proofs of God's existence. When proofs are wrenched out of their experiential and religious matrix and made abstract, mathematical and apodictic, then such proofs should create in all a feelling of uneasiness. But the spirit of the proofs, in the final analysis, is nothing but the search for God and recognition of the unconditioned that is at the basis of all experienced reality, above all, at the basis of our own consciousness that absolute claims are made on us. The proofs are nothing but the explicitation of every man's spontaneous quest after ultimate meaning. In-depth reflection on this experience is part of any open philosophy. Precisely because of this fact, the repetitious and often ignorant attacks on the proofs of God's existence is equally disgusting. Yet we do accept that the earnest questioning of the proofs by great minds must make every philosopher cautious in his rational approach to the Mystery of all mysteries.

Coming now to the conception of God's nature and the God-world relationship, it must be admitted that we can have no adequate or fully satisfactory conception of the Absolute. The very finitude and historicity of all human knowledge and the conditioning of all our concepts by so many factors should make us transcend any given picture of the Supreme and God-world relationship. It is therefore, legitimate for us today to reflect further on the nature of God. In this philosophical undertaking, on the one hand we must with sympathy and understanding study the various philosophies of God; but on the other hand, into our present reflections on God, we must take in the specific problems faced by contemporary men and especially the deep concern for men, that is at the centre of all present thought and striving.

A God who is conceived of as so transcendent, so immutable, so unaffected and invulnerable, so independent and omnipotent that man is not a free 'I' before him may not interest present day men and women. If God's holiness is considered as an isolation and not a radical 'no' to the injustices, selfishness, oppressive structures, lust and meanness of men; if his goodness and benevolence are considered as acts of condescension; if the acts of his kindness are finally thought of as directed to himself; if his freedom is such that he can play with men as with puppets; if his eternity is so extolled that he cannot know us, temporal beings in our succession and vicissitudes; if the Creator is not so related to the world as to make him "responsible" for and concerned with the plight of history, then many might ask why we need to think of such a God at all. Is such a God turned to man? On the other hand, a God who is thought of as so immanent in the world and so immersed in human history; a God to whom we attribute all our human feelings and sufferings in a very human manner; a God who is partial to some; a God brought down to our own level and measure, cannot be the ground and centre of hope for a btter future, the final guarantee of our threatened freedom and the strong hand that can lift us up from the quagmire in which we are in.

Because of these problems there are at present many attempts at evolving newer and more relevant philosophies of God. Process philosophy and theology with their acceptance of dipolarity in God, the theistic strands of existentialism which consider God as the

absolute 'Thou' lurking in every truncated experience of inter-personal communion, and the religious interpretations of analytic philosophy with their emphasis on the faith or religious context of all God-talk are looking for new ways of understanding God. Classical philosophies of God are being critically examined.

In India too with our wealth of religious and philosophical traditions, and in collaboration with Western thought, we are called upon to reflect on our specific problems. We have all the problems of a third-world developing nation. At the same time, ours is a religiously and culturally pluralistic country. The very antiquity of our customs, manners and beliefs, and the influx of modern ideas and technology into the land create new problems. The social, political and economic state of the country which is intimately related to and in some way rooted in the religions and ethos of our people should become part of our philosophical reflection and questioning. Here we have one of the major tasks facing Indian philosophy at this juncture of our history. Only from this broad based and relevant point of departure we can hope to create dynamic, freedom and progress oriented philosophies of God. To us Indians the whole problem of the final meaning of life and of history is very actual. We have also to be open to the disclosures of the Absolute in truthfulness, love and service.

Thomas and Madhva in their times, though remaining faithful to the valid insights of the past, had the courage to rethink the past, including the conceptions of God in the light of the problems besetting them and their societies. Today we are living in a critical and transitional period of history. So we are called upon to critically examine the past in the light of our present problems and concerns. The many crucial facts facing us force us to reflect on the meaning of our lives and of our history. From out of our openness to the disclosures of God in nature and history, in love, truth and service and even in prayer and mystical experiences and through our reflection on these disclosures and on our own strivings and aspirations, there will certainly emerge new insights into God which are needed for our and our people's freedom and total progress.

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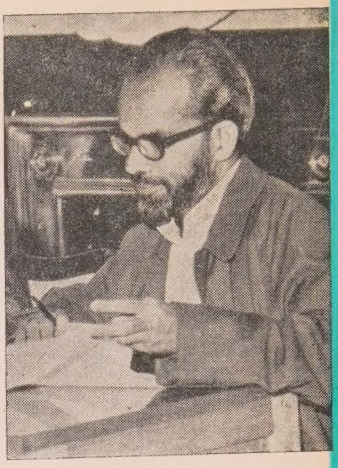

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